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Books to
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PETER TOEG

**talks to us about his
transcendent
short story collection**

LOVE & FATE



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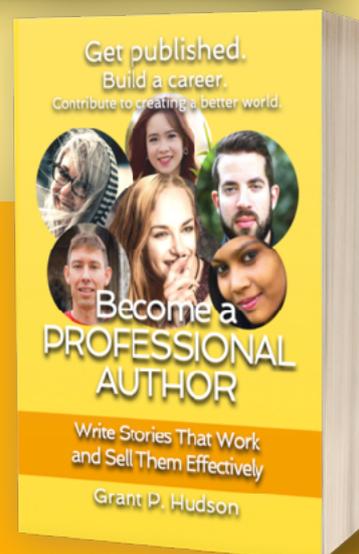
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Dear Reader,

As we reach the end of the fourth year of the Inner Circle Writers' Magazine, we are privileged to get a glimpse into the world of author **Peter Toeg** and learn about the background to his collection *Love & Fate*, plus we get fiction from **Jim Bates** and **Gabriella Balcom**, another episode in the continuing story of 'At the Back of the North Wind' by **George MacDonald**, and an unusual tale from legendary author **Honore de Balzac**!

In addition, we have a review of **Sharon Frame Gay's** *Song of the Highway* collection by **Gary Bonn**, and insight into how to set up and run an e-newsletter from experienced author **Elizabeth Bailey**, as well as poetry from **Pawel Markiewicz**, **Elizabeth Brown**, **Fabrice B. Poussin** and **John Grey**.

Plus more insights into the processes behind the creation of fiction in our serialisation of *Myth & the 'Now'*, and an examination of concepts behind finances in *The Wonderful World of Marketing*.

That's not all of course: submission opportunities, a quiz and other delights lay within!

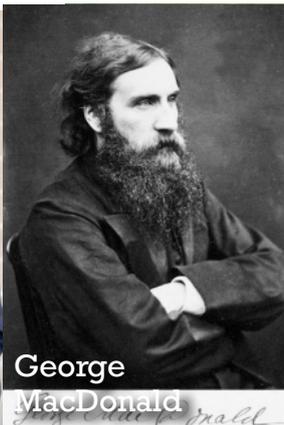
Enjoy!

Grant P. Hudson

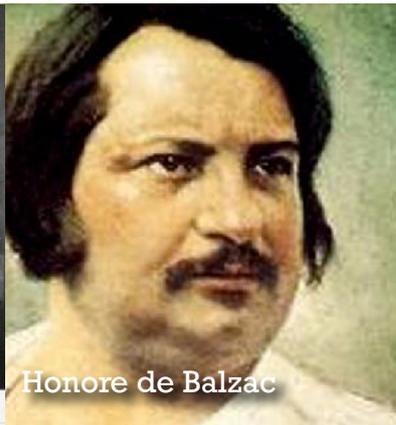
CONTRIBUTORS



Peter Toeg



George MacDonald



Honore de Balzac



Elizabeth Bailey

with **Jim Bates**, **Gary Bonn**, **Pawel Markiewicz**, **Elizabeth Brown**, **Fabrice B. Poussin** and **John Grey**.

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ARTICLE by ELIZABETH BAILEY

Elizabeth Bailey grew up in Africa with unconventional parents, where she loved reading and drama. On returning to England, she developed her career in acting, theatre directing and finally writing. Elizabeth's latest venture is The Lady Fan Mystery series, published by Regency Books. The novels feature amateur sleuth Lady Orilla Fanshawe and a cast of family members including her husband and childhood friend Francis Fanshawe. She originally published Regency romances with Eastleigh Mills & Coon and has many titles in her Brides by Chance Regency Adventure series, now also published by Regency. Elizabeth also writes edgy women's romances. Elizabeth's most recent novel is *The One More Tomorrow*, where she gives the ghost of the real Macbeth returns, presenting his villainous portrayal by Shakespeare. And she has published a romantic suspense novella, *Science of a Stranger*.

Elizabeth lives in Sussex, England. She is still an avid reader with eclectic tastes and she spends her spare time helping other writers improve their craft.

How To Start A NEWSLETTER And Build Subscribers

Hosting

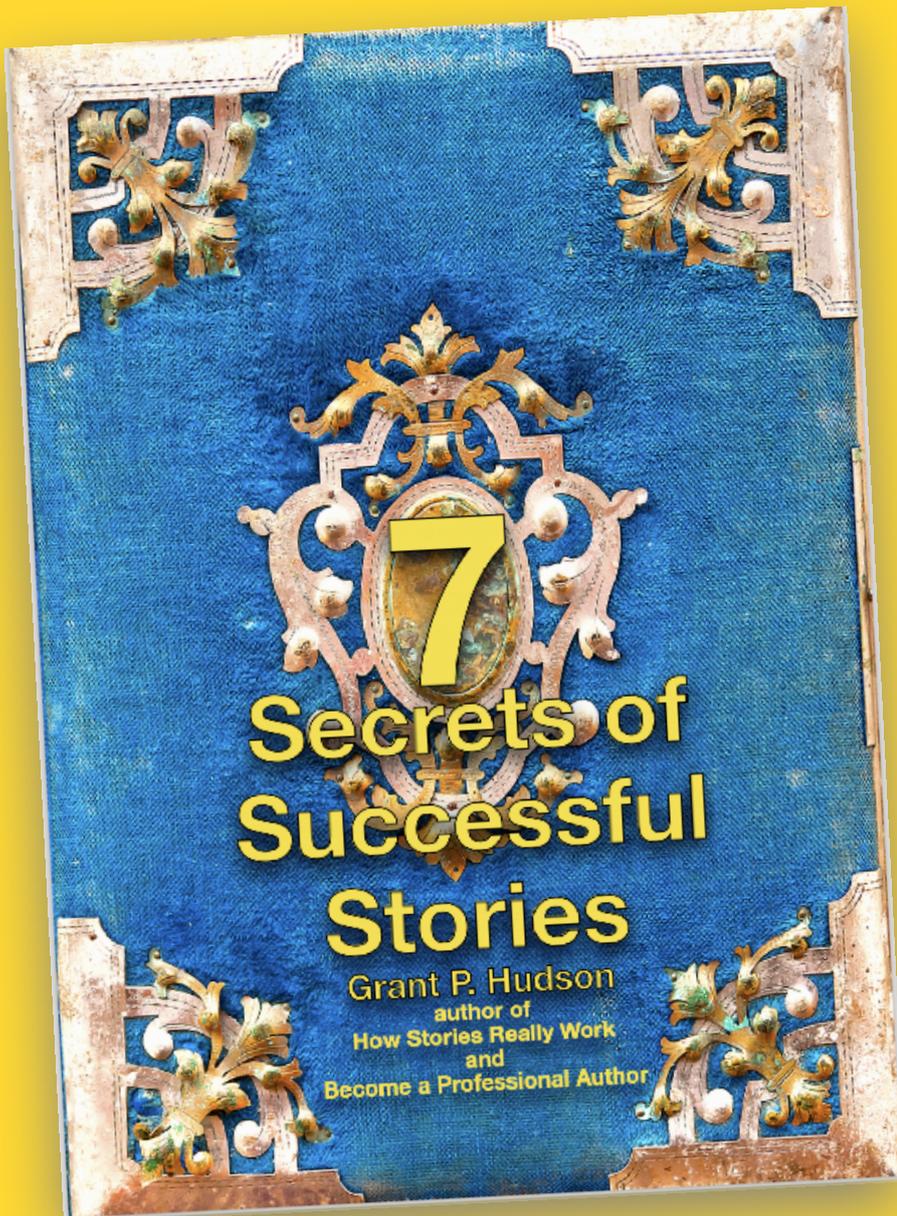
I recommend Mailerlite rather than Mailchimp. It's a lot easier and it's based in Europe, which means the chat helps and costs likely to be around where we need them. They have updated to allow I tracked and I can track things. I just carry on doing my old style newsletters because I can't stand the learning curve of new programs. But they are very good at making it easy to understand videos that show you how to do things.

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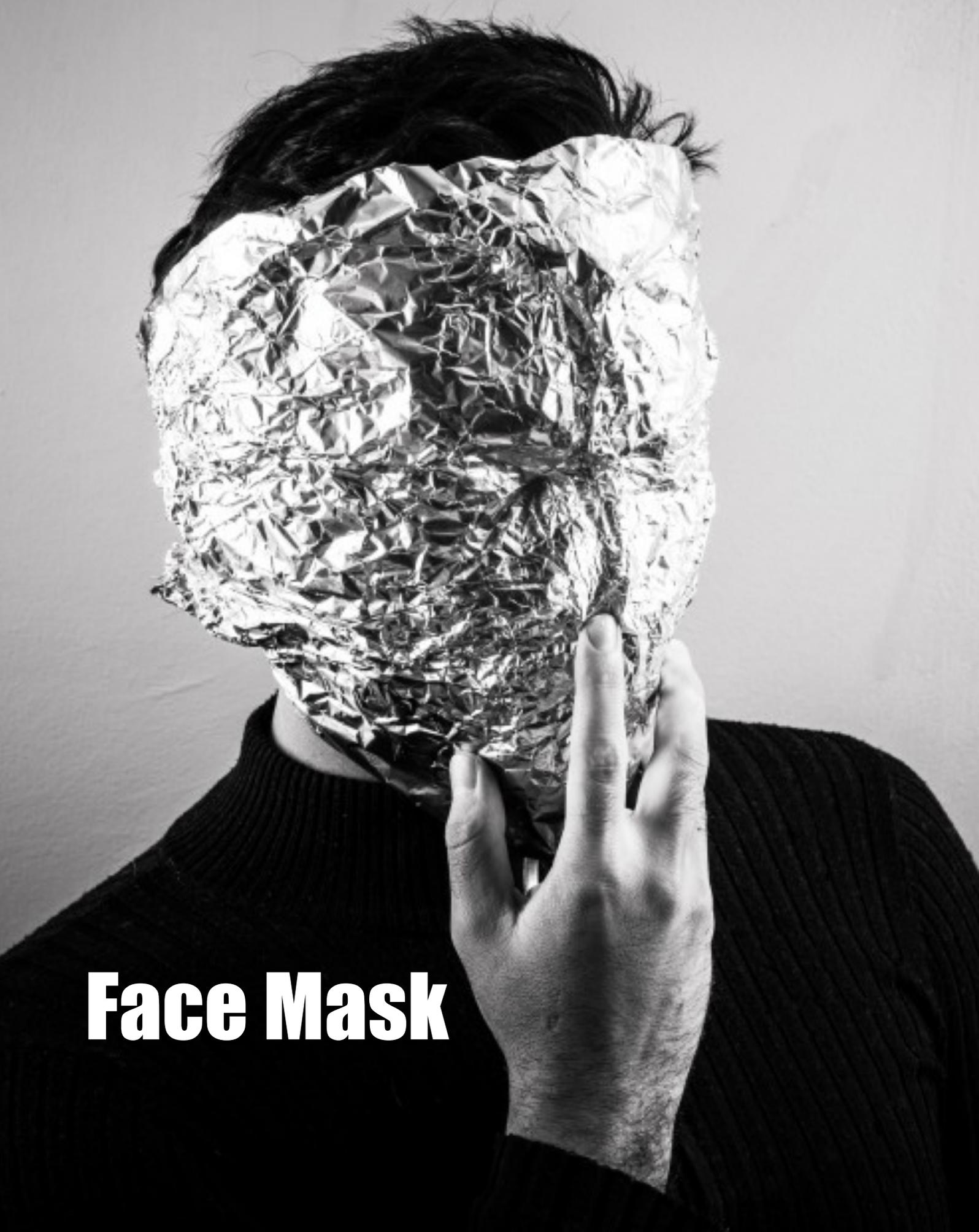
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FICTION by JIM BATES



Face Mask

The invitation read *Time to celebrate. The pandemic is over and Blue is having her first birthday. Please attend. We'd love to see you!*

Damn. Now I had a decision to make. Should I go or not?

There's no way to sugarcoat this, so I'll tell it straight: I had my face ripped off twenty-three years ago. You might have read about it in the papers. It was a big deal for a while, the result of me getting between a momma bear and a guy and his son who later turned out to become good friends of mine. My action saved Jack Sorry and his son Ethan but left me in pretty bad shape. When reconstructive surgery was finally over a few years after the attack all I could say to anyone who looked at me weirdly was, "You shoulda seen the other guy," making a joke.

But no one asked, and they certainly didn't laugh, then or now, and I don't blame them. I'm not the easiest thing to look at. The pandemic helped a lot, though. I wore my Covid mask all the time. Now that it's over I might even keep wearing it, too. What the heck, go with what works for you right?

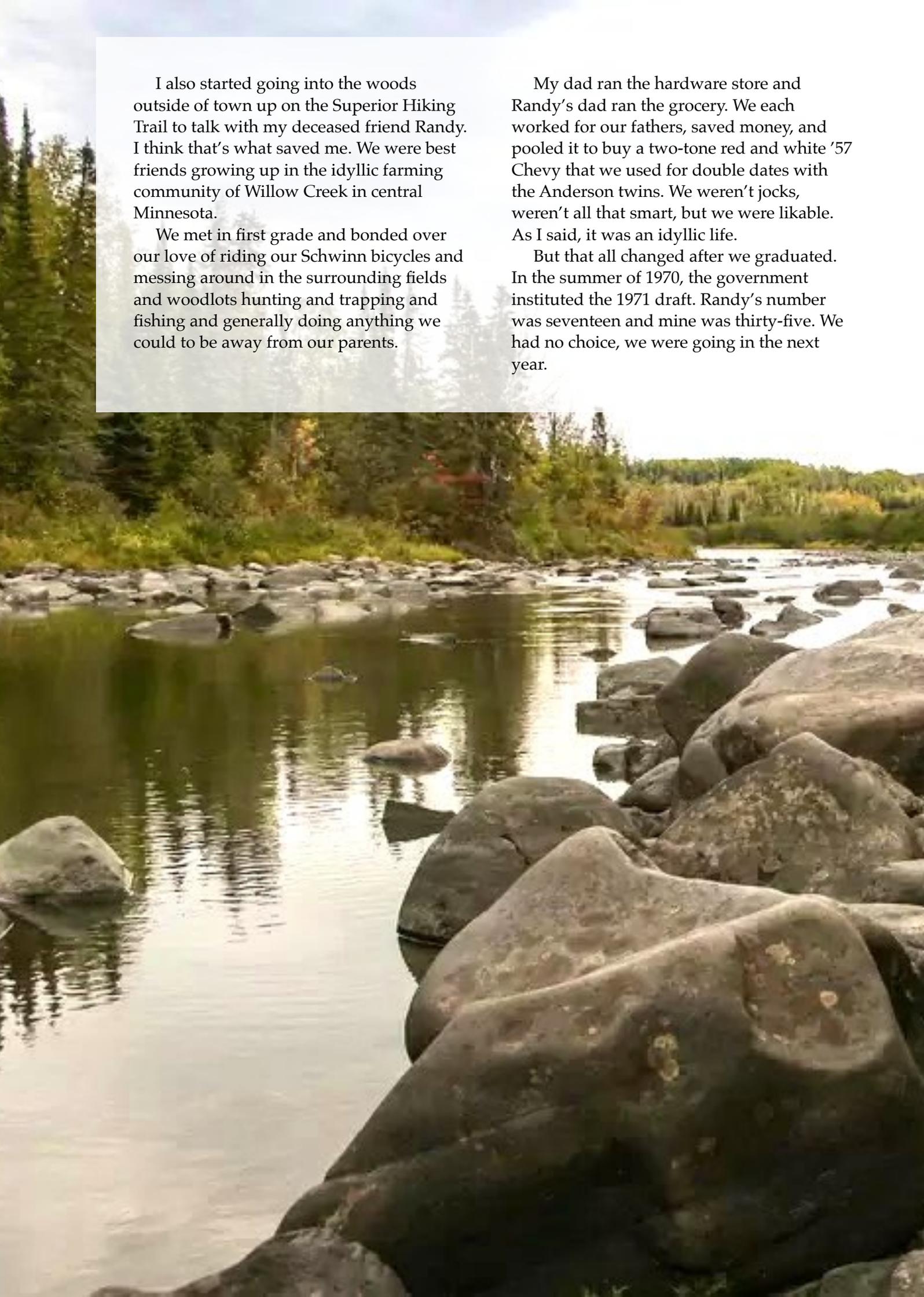
But maybe not. That's where the birthday invitation comes in.

Maybe it's just me. I used to be okay looking. I had long hair and a thick beard I kept nicely trimmed. I was a loner, though, that was for sure, and didn't enjoy being around people all that much. Still don't, to be honest.

I'd fled to Canada to escape the draft while my best friend Randy enlisted and was killed the next year in 1971 in Vietnam by a trip wire explosion while on patrol supporting Operation Lam Son. I came back to the States in 1977 when President Carter pardoned us draft dodgers. I only got as far as Grand Marias, forty miles south of the border because there was nothing much to come home to; Mom had died and my dad, well, let's just say my dad and I had our issues.

I got a job working in Nieminen's Hardware, found a cheap apartment, and began working as a way to support my self-pitying and self-medicating bad habits.



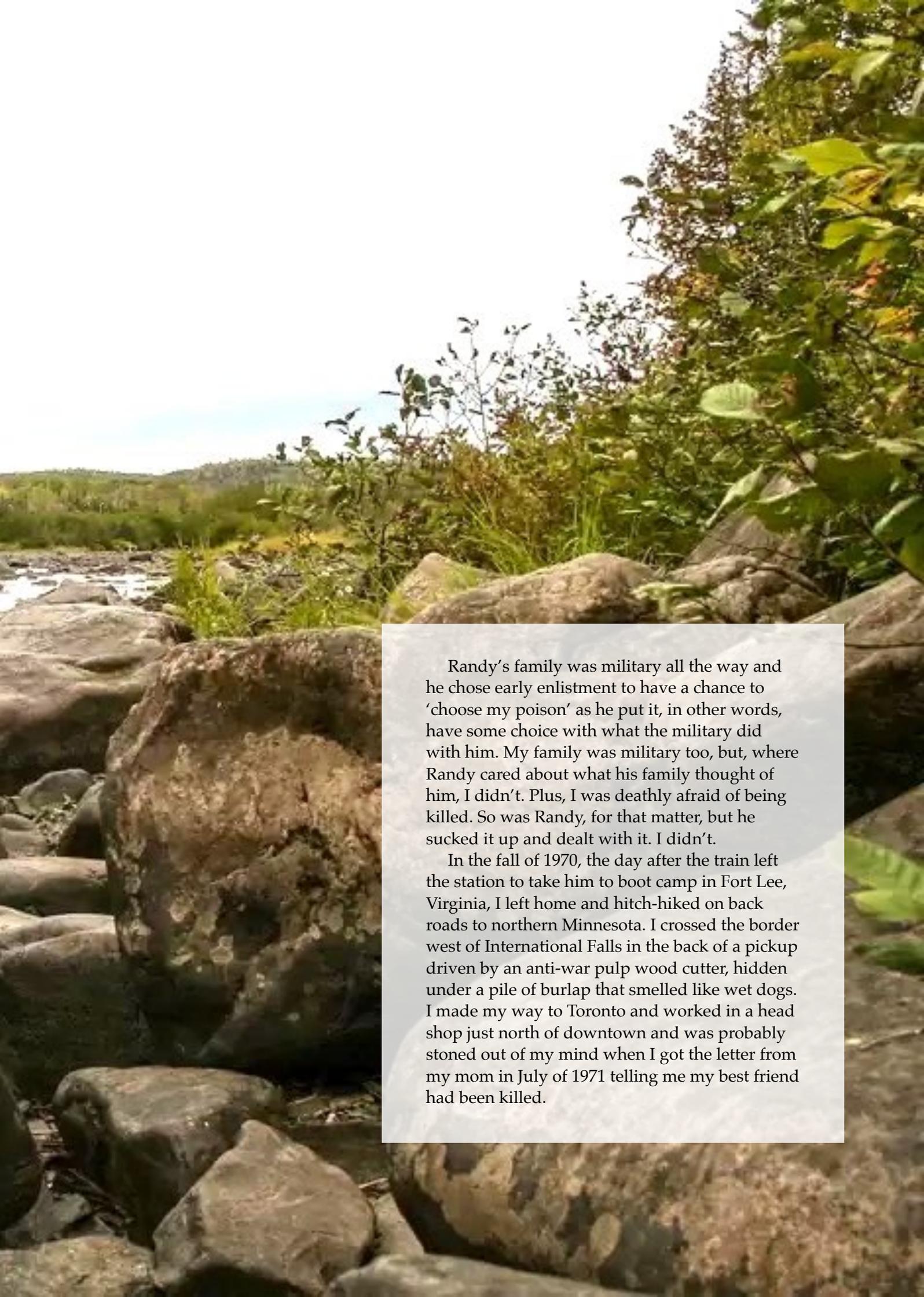
A scenic view of a river flowing through a forested area. The foreground is dominated by large, smooth, grey boulders. The river water is calm, reflecting the surrounding greenery and sky. The background shows a dense forest of trees, some with autumn-colored leaves. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

I also started going into the woods outside of town up on the Superior Hiking Trail to talk with my deceased friend Randy. I think that's what saved me. We were best friends growing up in the idyllic farming community of Willow Creek in central Minnesota.

We met in first grade and bonded over our love of riding our Schwinn bicycles and messing around in the surrounding fields and woodlots hunting and trapping and fishing and generally doing anything we could to be away from our parents.

My dad ran the hardware store and Randy's dad ran the grocery. We each worked for our fathers, saved money, and pooled it to buy a two-tone red and white '57 Chevy that we used for double dates with the Anderson twins. We weren't jocks, weren't all that smart, but we were likable. As I said, it was an idyllic life.

But that all changed after we graduated. In the summer of 1970, the government instituted the 1971 draft. Randy's number was seventeen and mine was thirty-five. We had no choice, we were going in the next year.

A scenic view of a rocky riverbank. The foreground is dominated by large, smooth, grey-brown boulders. A river flows through the middle ground, its white water creating a soft, misty atmosphere. The background is filled with dense, vibrant green foliage, including tall grasses and various shrubs. The sky is a pale, clear blue, suggesting a bright, sunny day. The overall mood is peaceful and natural.

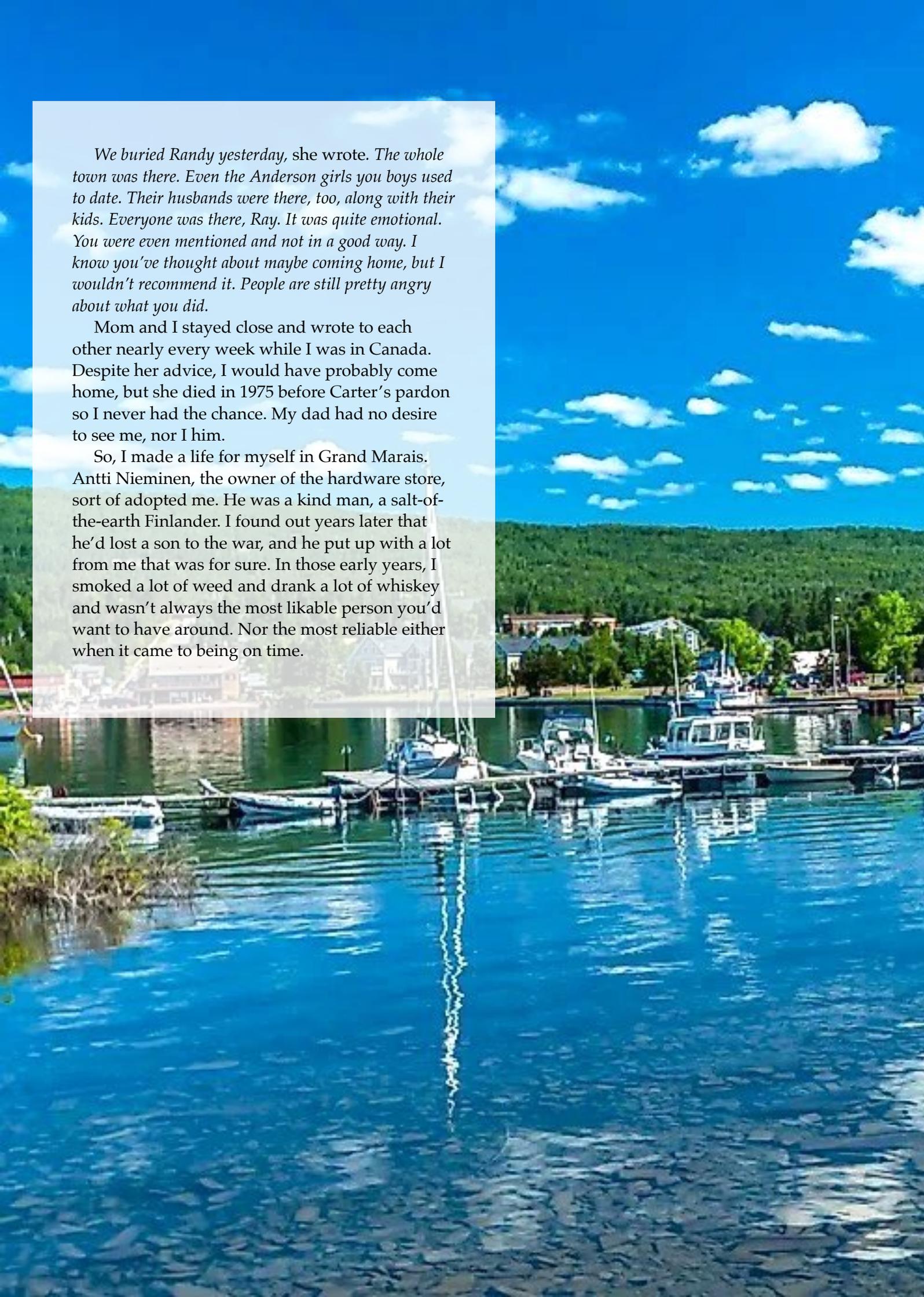
Randy's family was military all the way and he chose early enlistment to have a chance to 'choose my poison' as he put it, in other words, have some choice with what the military did with him. My family was military too, but, where Randy cared about what his family thought of him, I didn't. Plus, I was deathly afraid of being killed. So was Randy, for that matter, but he sucked it up and dealt with it. I didn't.

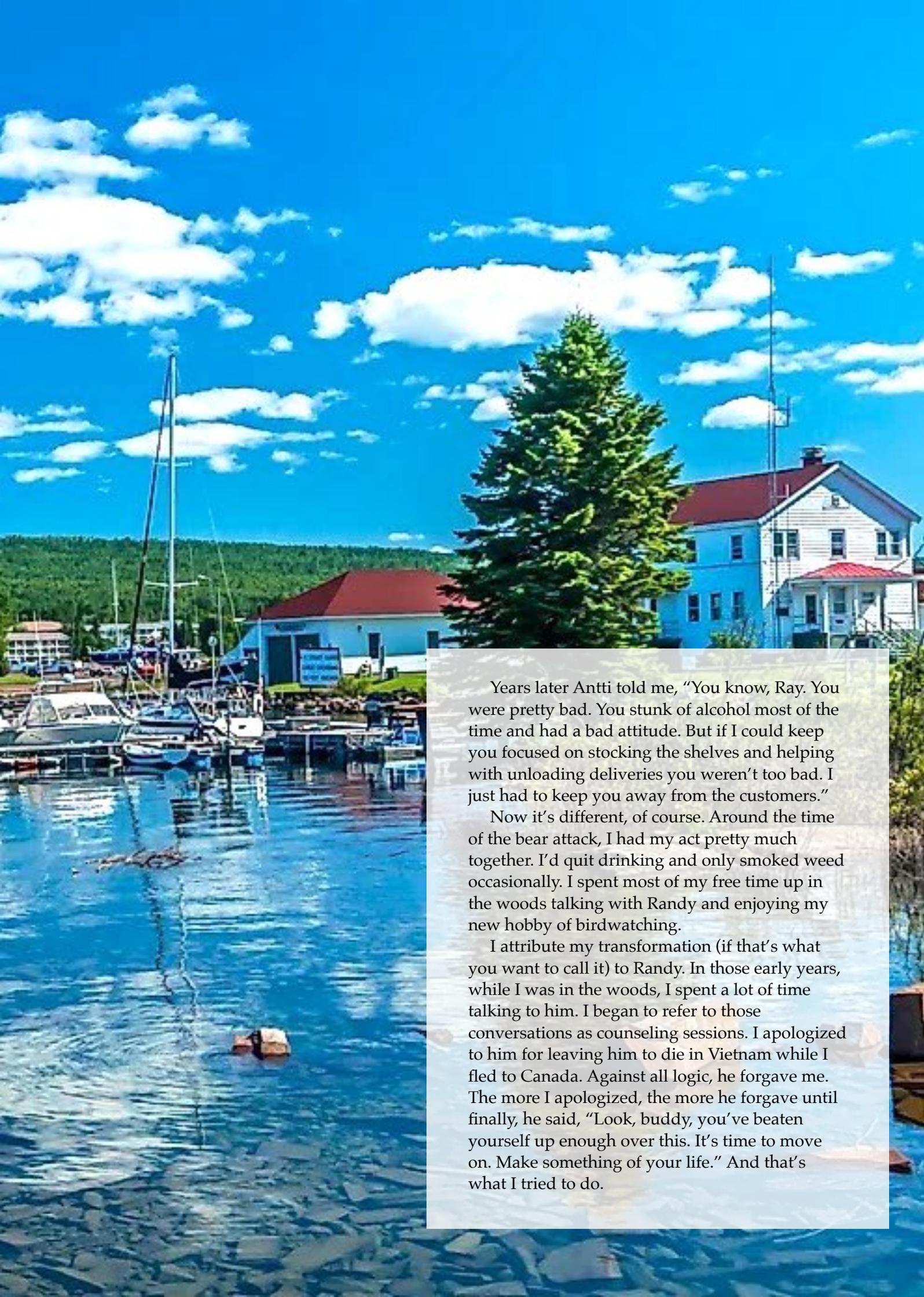
In the fall of 1970, the day after the train left the station to take him to boot camp in Fort Lee, Virginia, I left home and hitch-hiked on back roads to northern Minnesota. I crossed the border west of International Falls in the back of a pickup driven by an anti-war pulp wood cutter, hidden under a pile of burlap that smelled like wet dogs. I made my way to Toronto and worked in a head shop just north of downtown and was probably stoned out of my mind when I got the letter from my mom in July of 1971 telling me my best friend had been killed.

We buried Randy yesterday, she wrote. The whole town was there. Even the Anderson girls you boys used to date. Their husbands were there, too, along with their kids. Everyone was there, Ray. It was quite emotional. You were even mentioned and not in a good way. I know you've thought about maybe coming home, but I wouldn't recommend it. People are still pretty angry about what you did.

Mom and I stayed close and wrote to each other nearly every week while I was in Canada. Despite her advice, I would have probably come home, but she died in 1975 before Carter's pardon so I never had the chance. My dad had no desire to see me, nor I him.

So, I made a life for myself in Grand Marais. Antti Nieminen, the owner of the hardware store, sort of adopted me. He was a kind man, a salt-of-the-earth Finlander. I found out years later that he'd lost a son to the war, and he put up with a lot from me that was for sure. In those early years, I smoked a lot of weed and drank a lot of whiskey and wasn't always the most likable person you'd want to have around. Nor the most reliable either when it came to being on time.





Years later Antti told me, “You know, Ray. You were pretty bad. You stunk of alcohol most of the time and had a bad attitude. But if I could keep you focused on stocking the shelves and helping with unloading deliveries you weren’t too bad. I just had to keep you away from the customers.”

Now it’s different, of course. Around the time of the bear attack, I had my act pretty much together. I’d quit drinking and only smoked weed occasionally. I spent most of my free time up in the woods talking with Randy and enjoying my new hobby of birdwatching.

I attribute my transformation (if that’s what you want to call it) to Randy. In those early years, while I was in the woods, I spent a lot of time talking to him. I began to refer to those conversations as counseling sessions. I apologized to him for leaving him to die in Vietnam while I fled to Canada. Against all logic, he forgave me. The more I apologized, the more he forgave until finally, he said, “Look, buddy, you’ve beaten yourself up enough over this. It’s time to move on. Make something of your life.” And that’s what I tried to do.

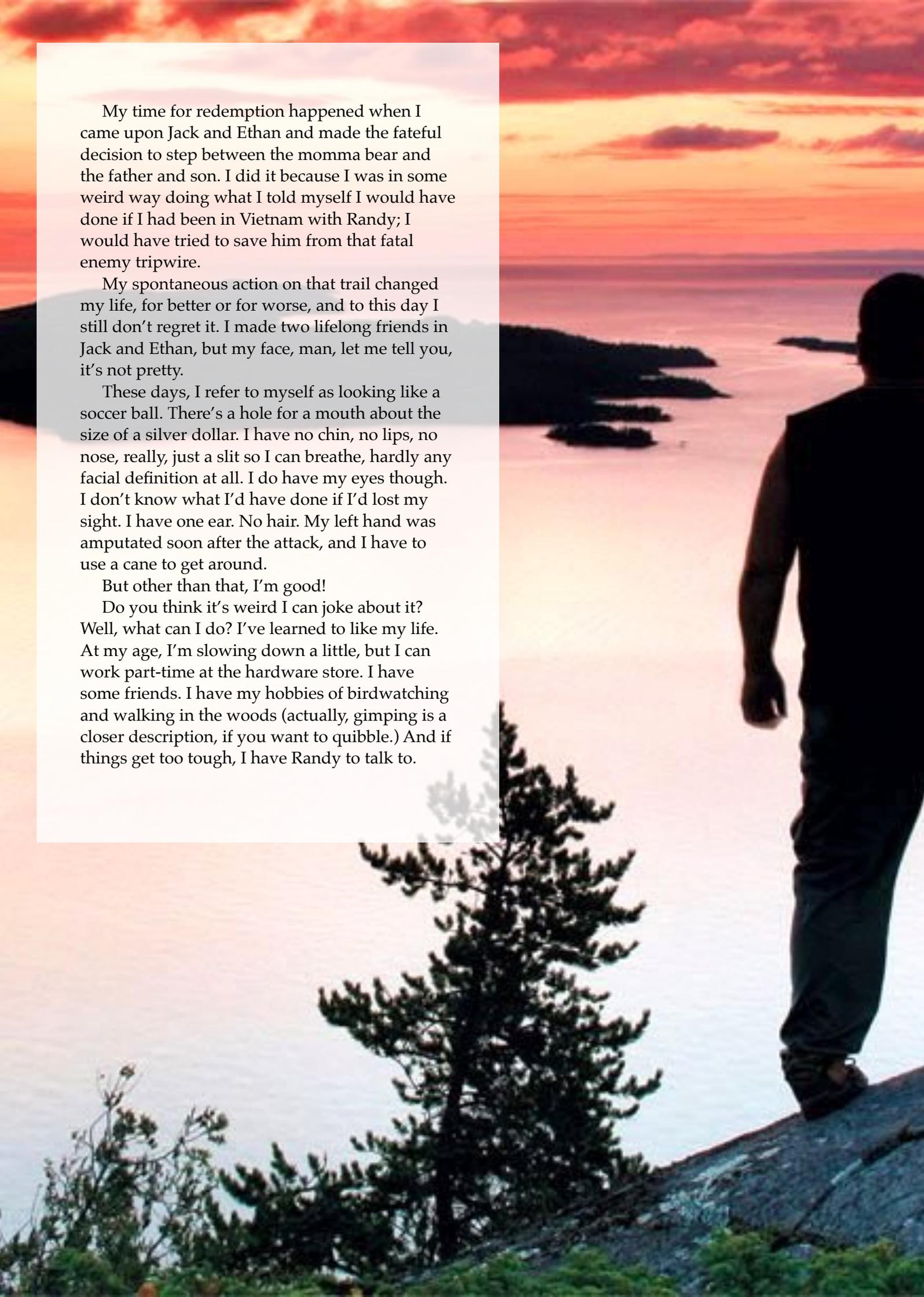
My time for redemption happened when I came upon Jack and Ethan and made the fateful decision to step between the momma bear and the father and son. I did it because I was in some weird way doing what I told myself I would have done if I had been in Vietnam with Randy; I would have tried to save him from that fatal enemy tripwire.

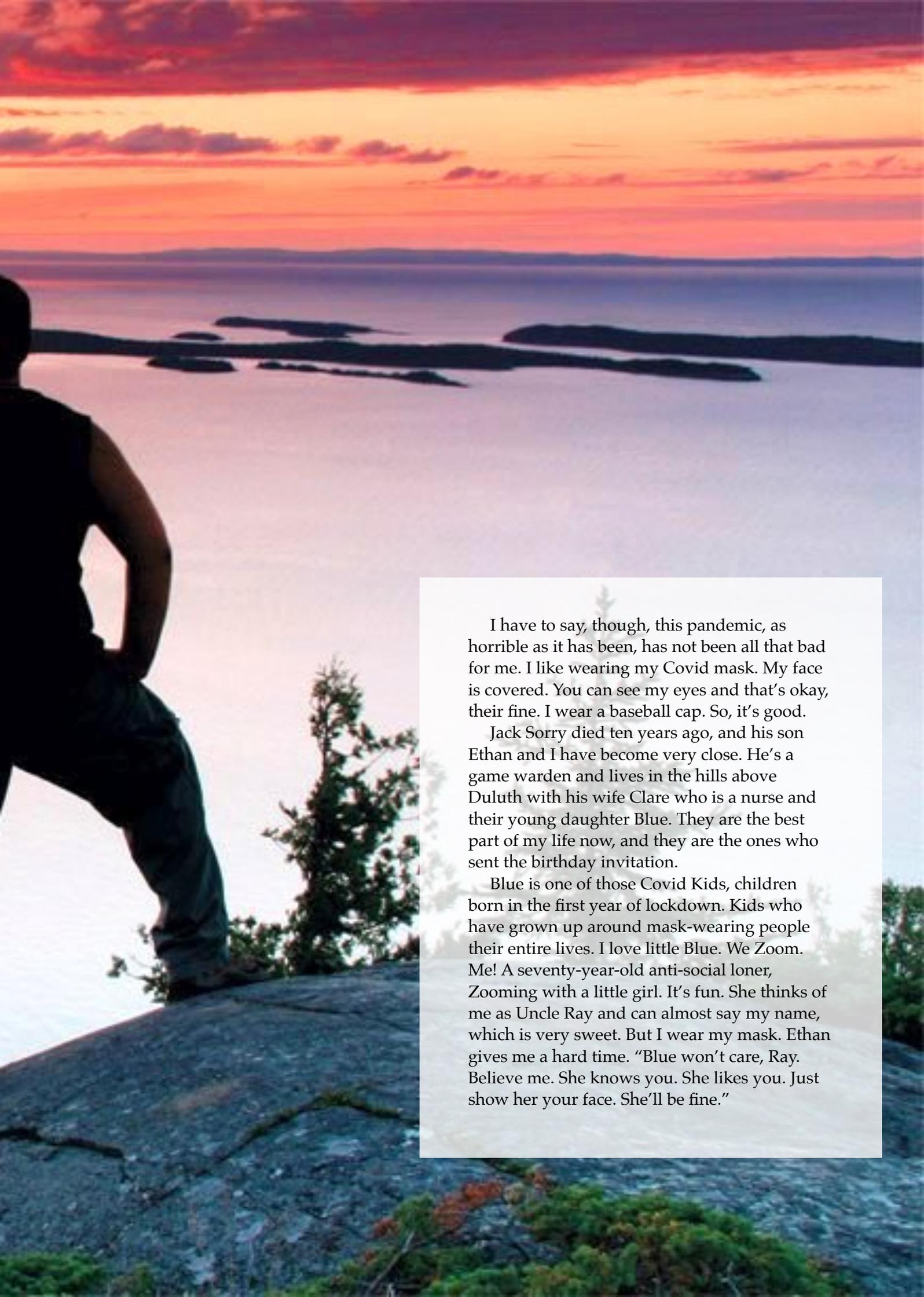
My spontaneous action on that trail changed my life, for better or for worse, and to this day I still don't regret it. I made two lifelong friends in Jack and Ethan, but my face, man, let me tell you, it's not pretty.

These days, I refer to myself as looking like a soccer ball. There's a hole for a mouth about the size of a silver dollar. I have no chin, no lips, no nose, really, just a slit so I can breathe, hardly any facial definition at all. I do have my eyes though. I don't know what I'd have done if I'd lost my sight. I have one ear. No hair. My left hand was amputated soon after the attack, and I have to use a cane to get around.

But other than that, I'm good!

Do you think it's weird I can joke about it? Well, what can I do? I've learned to like my life. At my age, I'm slowing down a little, but I can work part-time at the hardware store. I have some friends. I have my hobbies of birdwatching and walking in the woods (actually, gimping is a closer description, if you want to quibble.) And if things get too tough, I have Randy to talk to.





I have to say, though, this pandemic, as horrible as it has been, has not been all that bad for me. I like wearing my Covid mask. My face is covered. You can see my eyes and that's okay, their fine. I wear a baseball cap. So, it's good.

Jack Sorry died ten years ago, and his son Ethan and I have become very close. He's a game warden and lives in the hills above Duluth with his wife Clare who is a nurse and their young daughter Blue. They are the best part of my life now, and they are the ones who sent the birthday invitation.

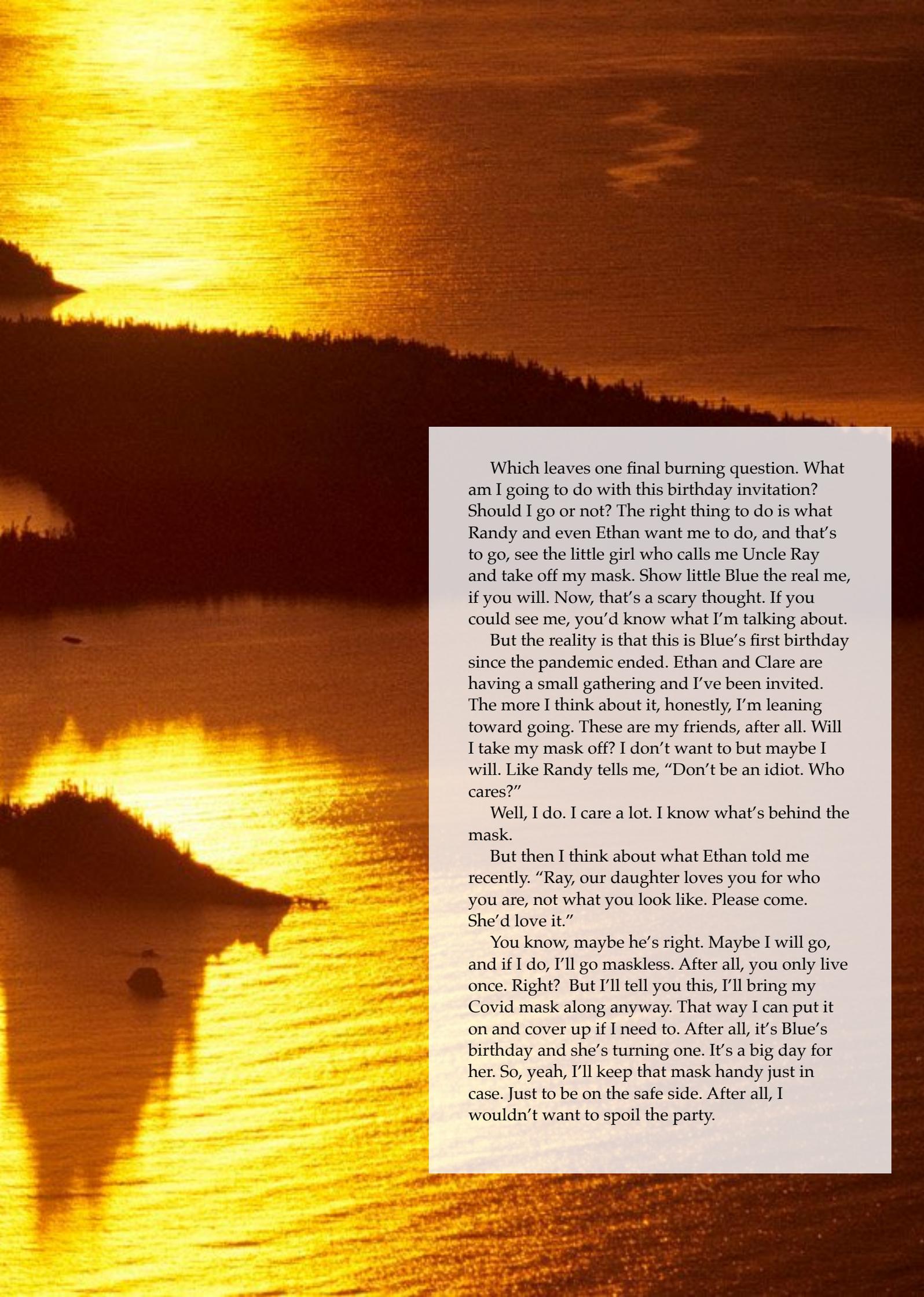
Blue is one of those Covid Kids, children born in the first year of lockdown. Kids who have grown up around mask-wearing people their entire lives. I love little Blue. We Zoom. Me! A seventy-year-old anti-social loner, Zooming with a little girl. It's fun. She thinks of me as Uncle Ray and can almost say my name, which is very sweet. But I wear my mask. Ethan gives me a hard time. "Blue won't care, Ray. Believe me. She knows you. She likes you. Just show her your face. She'll be fine."

Maybe. But then again, maybe not. I don't want to risk it. I like the little kid too much to terrify her even though Ethan says I won't. I don't want to take a chance. So, I send her little jumpers and stuffed animals, and we Zoom while Ethan and Clare, and Blue open what I send and I watch from my apartment in Grand Marias. I love seeing the little girl smile. But I leave my mask on. What would happen if I took it off and Blue freaked out and never wanted to see me again? I don't know what I'd do.

I've talked to Randy about it and he thinks I'm being an idiot. "Just do it, for Pete's sake, Ray," he's told me time and time again. "The pandemic's over and it's time to move on. Take your mask off and let the little kid see you. She won't care. Hells bells, it shouldn't be any big deal."

Well, I like Randy and I trust his judgment most of the time, but on this issue, I'm going to have to disagree. I don't want to take a chance, so I'm leaving it on.





Which leaves one final burning question. What am I going to do with this birthday invitation? Should I go or not? The right thing to do is what Randy and even Ethan want me to do, and that's to go, see the little girl who calls me Uncle Ray and take off my mask. Show little Blue the real me, if you will. Now, that's a scary thought. If you could see me, you'd know what I'm talking about.

But the reality is that this is Blue's first birthday since the pandemic ended. Ethan and Clare are having a small gathering and I've been invited. The more I think about it, honestly, I'm leaning toward going. These are my friends, after all. Will I take my mask off? I don't want to but maybe I will. Like Randy tells me, "Don't be an idiot. Who cares?"

Well, I do. I care a lot. I know what's behind the mask.

But then I think about what Ethan told me recently. "Ray, our daughter loves you for who you are, not what you look like. Please come. She'd love it."

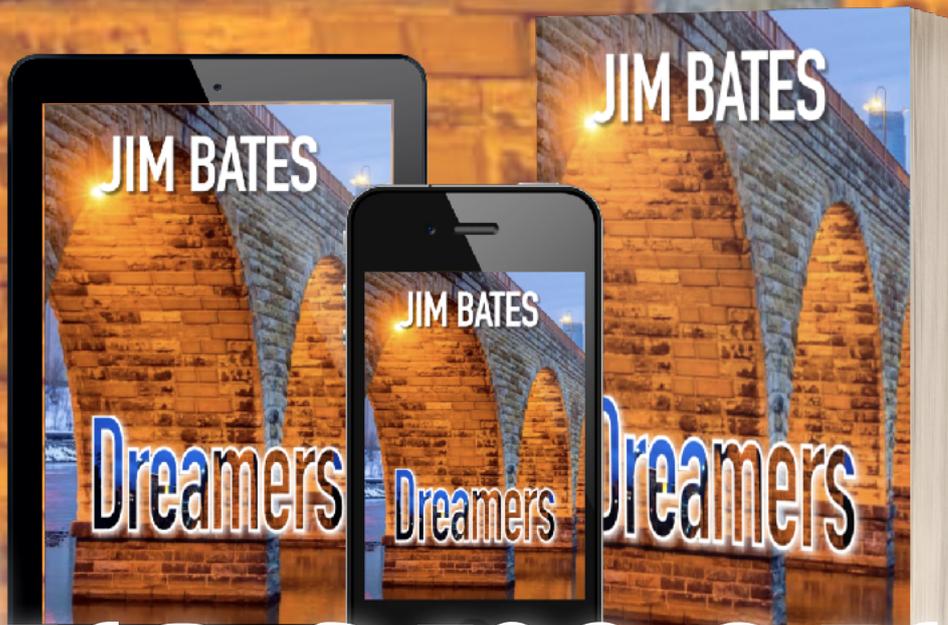
You know, maybe he's right. Maybe I will go, and if I do, I'll go maskless. After all, you only live once. Right? But I'll tell you this, I'll bring my Covid mask along anyway. That way I can put it on and cover up if I need to. After all, it's Blue's birthday and she's turning one. It's a big day for her. So, yeah, I'll keep that mask handy just in case. Just to be on the safe side. After all, I wouldn't want to spoil the party.

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Dreamers

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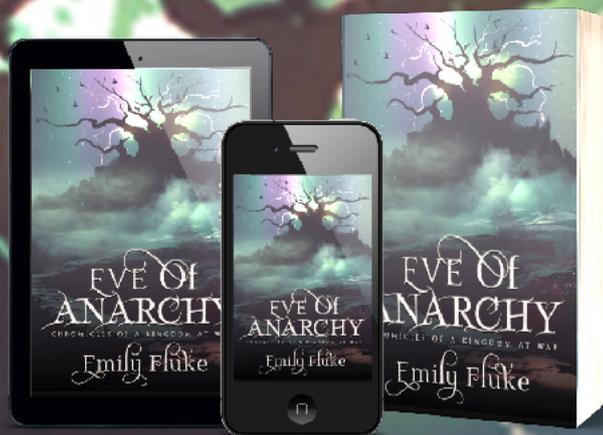
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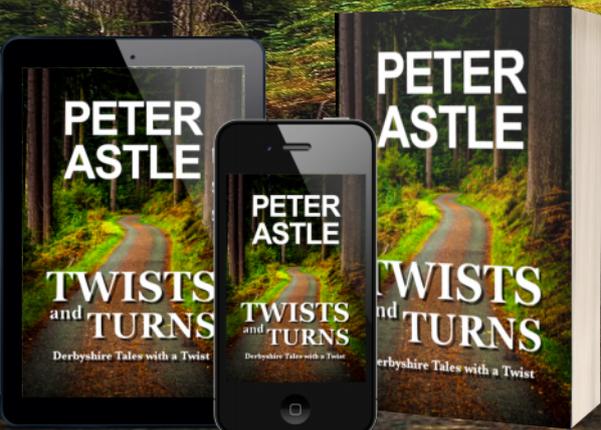
PETER ASTLE



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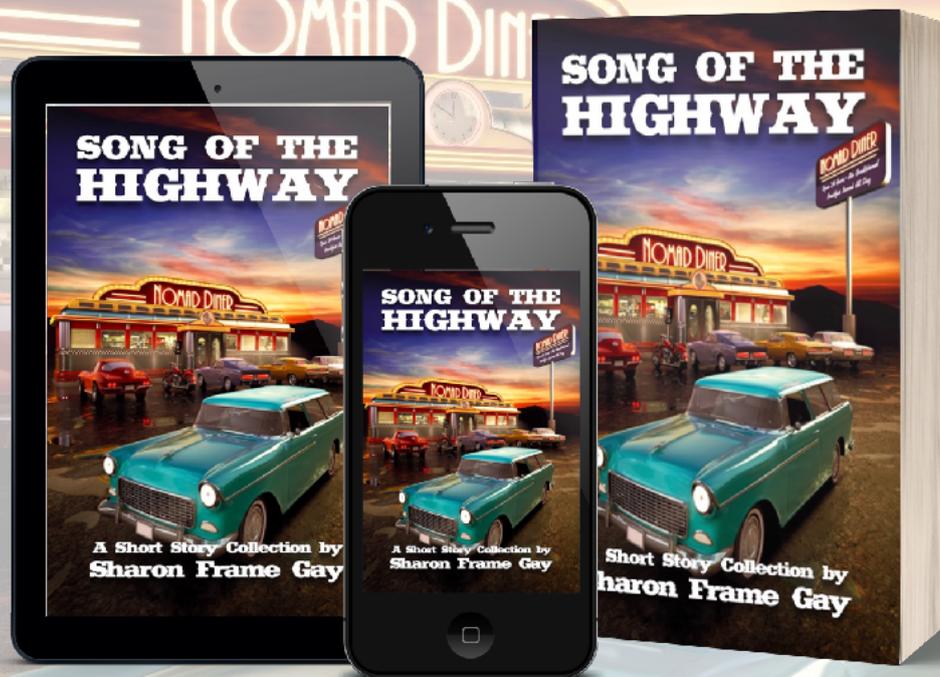


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BOOK REVIEW by GARY BONN

SONG OF THE HIGHWAY

A Short Story Collection
by Sharon Frame Gay



Here is a brief (hopefully no-spoiler) review of Sharon's book, both from the viewpoint of reader and writer.

For the reader:

Given the comments I've received regarding this book I was prepared for something exceptional.

It's lovely to discover so fast I'm in the hands of a master storyteller. I can relax and be confident nothing is going to jar me back into the real world. I can travel into the writer's mind and imagination and be totally unaware this is happening.

Sharon's writing is like a comfortable bed in which the reader can sleep safely

and dream ... and have nightmares.

In this book of stories you'll be other people, be them so hard you'll forget who you are. You'll become ages you've never been or barely remember, be in situations never imagined, and get into characters' heads and cultures beyond your experience.

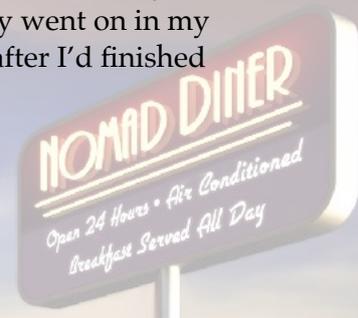
This could be said of many books, but rarely have I been immersed so deep so fast and so often. In this respect this is as good a reader experience as is possible to achieve. So profoundly the character, I sensed all around,

understood my predicament, and laughed, panicked, wept precisely as I should.

Intensity: there's no room for boredom or those passages you endure because it will probably prove worthwhile later. These

stories lift, crash and wring you out relentlessly.

Not a desperate page-turner, I wanted – and took – time between each story to reflect. They went on in my head long after I'd finished each one.





For the writer:

Anyone would think Sharon has written dozens of books such is her skill. The language is clear and so easy to read I don't remember a hiccup in attention.

The sheer confidence she has when taking you into heads, situations and emotions shows an exceptional degree of that quality which enables a writer to get into you, seize your

whole attention and whirl you into the unusual and unique – and make you believe and experience it all as real.

Sharon knows her characters well. They absolutely seem genuine. You know these people; they could be you too.

Settings: It's clear a lot of very thorough research has been done (for the reader that means it all feels right and knowing the subject, time, or

setting better would do little change this).

Let me develop that a little. In those stories where obvious fantasy wasn't an ingredient, I was never left with the feeling these events couldn't have happened or the setting was in any way unconvincing, absolutely the opposite. This adds a lot of punch to which the reader is going to react.



The characters are totally in tune with their environment. This is easy to achieve if you are familiar with both, disastrous if you get it wrong. That the characters interacted with their environment as if it were home, so did I.

A last point: Here is a writer who can speak convincingly from male and female perspectives equally well without stereotyping, implied judgements or accidental crashes into fourth walls. As a reader you miss

the swap, it's so flawless. As a writer, you'll see just how Sharon makes you that person without adding opinion, morality or other framework, nor suggesting how you should judge the character.

It's been some weeks since I finished these stories and, now the dust has settled, I'm left with three strong points to make: The degree of reader immersion which has been achieved. The intensity of emotion the reader

experiences. The deft use of unusual/unique and very real situations the reader is placed – and how that placement is achieved.

Thanks Gary!

Sharon Frame Gay's *Song of the Highway* can be found [here](#).

CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

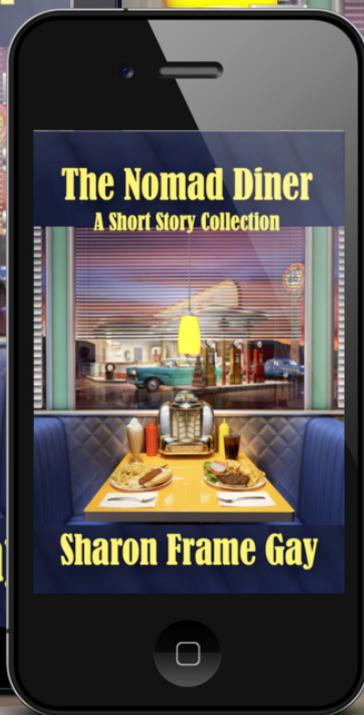
SHARON FRAME GAY



*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



www.clarendonhousebooks.com/sharonframegay

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—Grant P. Hudson, Editor



www.clarendonhousebooks.com/alexander-marshall



SPECIAL FEATURE

PETER TOEG

talks to us about his transcendent short story collection

LOVE & FATE



A Writer's Obituary

Who better to write a life's epilogue than a writer? What better obituary than your own?

Writer, huh? Let's first deal with the critics who've read me: "He wrote long torturous sentences." "Well, he *did* write fiction." "He gave it all to get published." "He may exceed his life quota of words."

My response: yes, yes (mostly), no, and maybe.

*

I'm an opsimath, not your well-read, cultivated thinker who started scribbling at age four to the delight of his parents.

No, an opsimath has nothing to do with math. It's that person who begins to learn or study later in life. A late bloomer. Think Grandma Moses.

Post-50 is not a bad place to start on the block. When you think about it, the first fifty years were a learning experience in that we accumulated a wealth of ideas

and experiences, many mundane, that had great salvage value when arranged on the pages of a novel or short story. Like practice, only selective. Memories come alive.

"We have two lives: The life we learn with and the life we live with after that," said Iris Gaines in *The Natural* film. That sums it up.

Life for an author doesn't start with the first words penned or keyed.



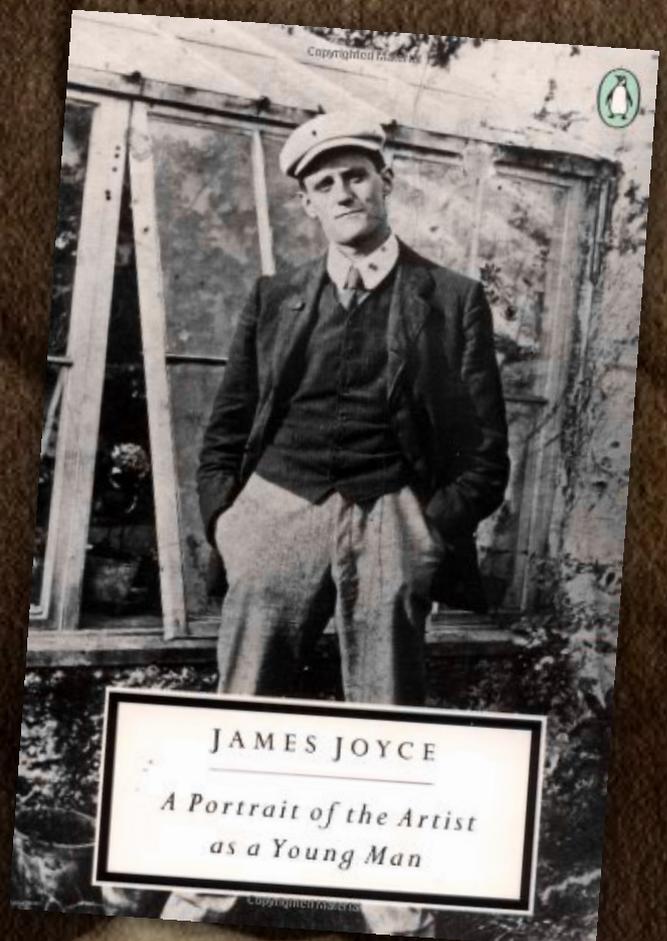
*

I was the product of a mixed marriage: two people of dramatically different backgrounds from faith to birth place to race. No one told me at the time. To me and so many of my generation, race became a marker only in later years. The mind often has to catch up with reality. Now everyone has mixed blood and takes pride in it.

I grew up on the shore of Long Island, a bridge away from New York's Manhattan Island—the Big Apple—where I would later live and work. I enjoyed blissful years before the information deluge and instant communication. Print books were all we had. I absorbed Greek mythology, popular fiction, and some classics, not always by choice.

One book and one author in particular influenced or at least appealed to me and were formative. The book: *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce's glimpse of Stephen Daedalus's youth.

I self-identified with Stephen's loneliness and insecurity, the chilled atmosphere, the sensory elements, the heartfelt reflection, and even the relationships. I read the novel over and over, feeling what Stephen felt, finding some validation. I was not alone.



The particular author whose half-dozen books I devoured was Harry Crews, a Southern US-born Rabelais, renowned later for darkly comic, biting satirical, grotesquely populated, and often violent novels. Physical freaks, inhabited his stories. *Freaks*. Not a word we use much anymore. We now celebrate differences of all kinds.

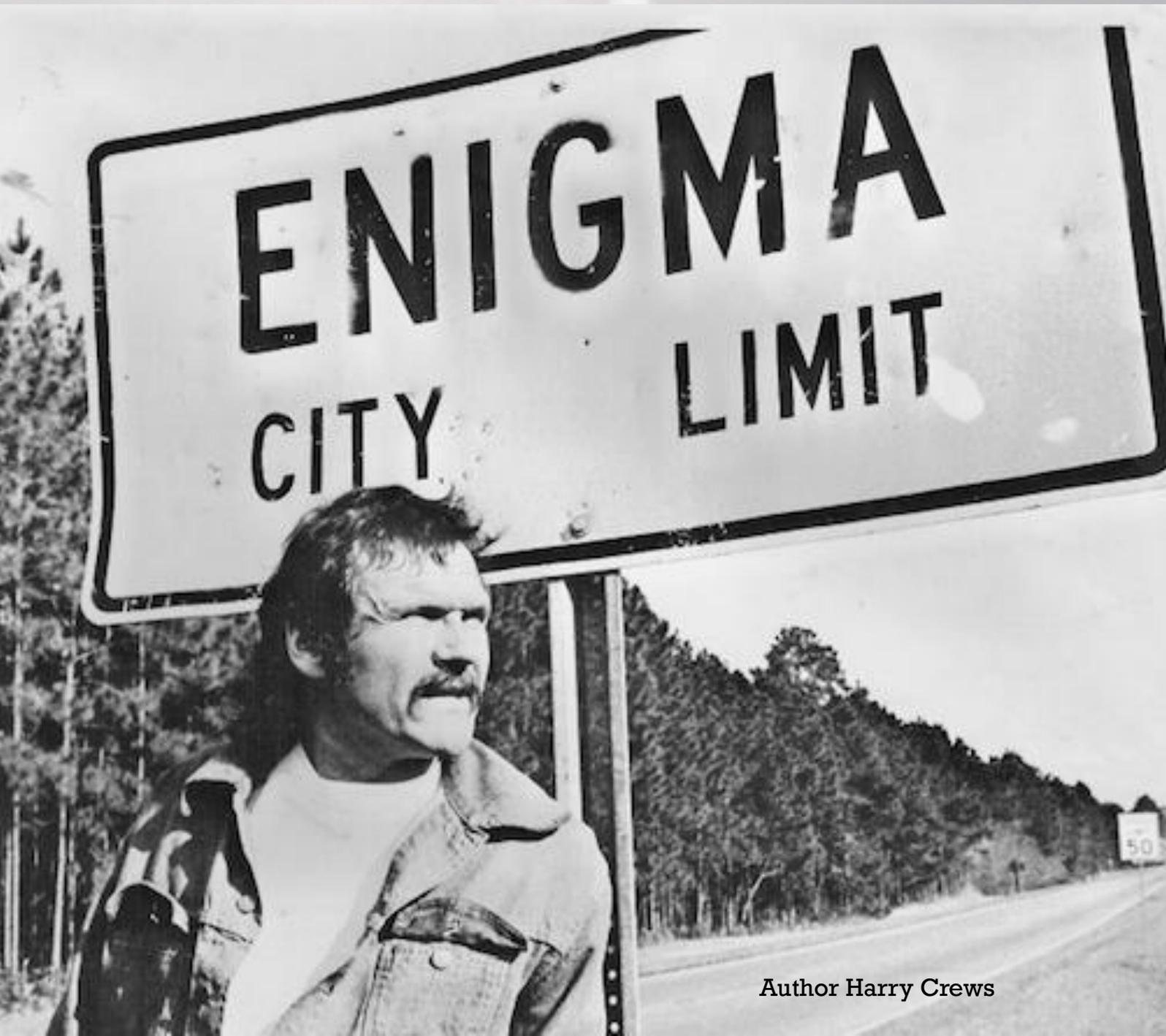
Crews, so disparate from Joyce, presented a vicarious balance to the inexperience of my ordinary existence.

In later years I fell into the more mainstream authors, most of which occupy the "Required Reads" lists. However, I also discovered Harry Chapin, the "story singer" of the 1980s, who wrote some of the most telling lyrics and themes many authors strive for. Realism, darkness, truth, irony, and differences, all of which impacted me.

Wally Lamb was a favorite for taking on challenges, writing and voicing a woman protagonist (as did I in a

novel), and creating *different* and beleaguered heroes.

I found inspiration in differences. In one book, I wrote of the mixed-breed man who fared as well as I did but couldn't overcome the label in his early life. I also created the autistic-different character who struggled against overwhelming odds and prejudices in the old South. He was the one who was gifted with healing hands.



Author Harry Crews

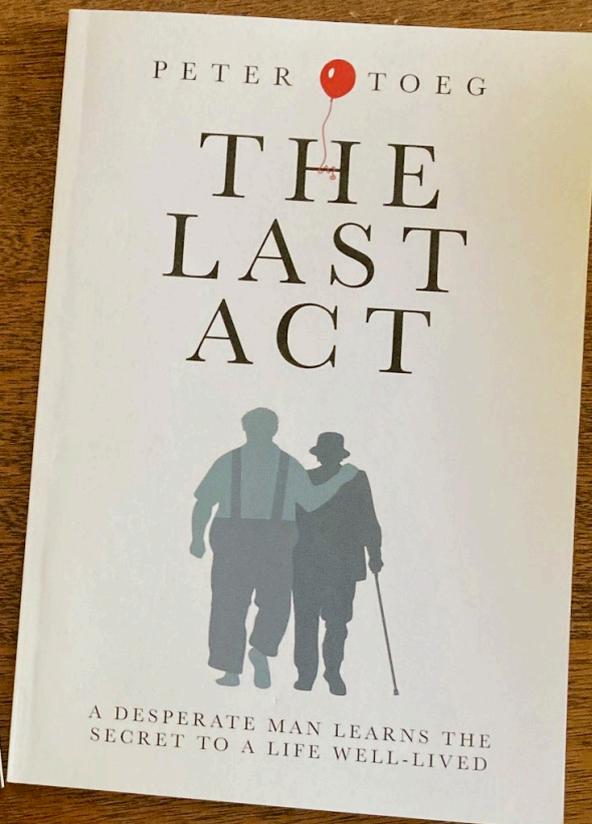
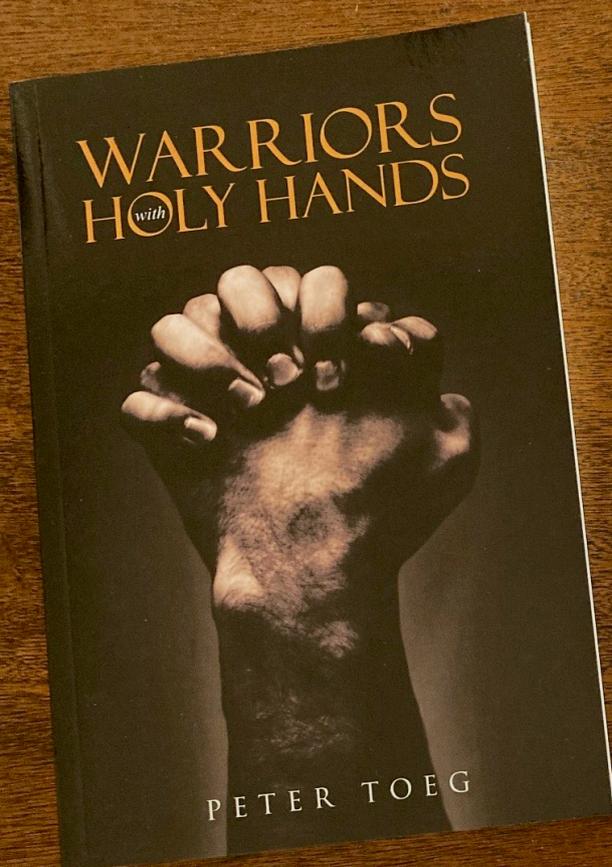
I created the man with a dazzling idea who approached the leaders of a city literally under siege and, with the help of others who believed in him, acted boldly and helped set the city free from spiritual darkness. Like a prophet. The character was a composite of equally courageous men—and women—who passed through my life, all of them prayer warriors on smaller battlefields.

I created another warrior who saved two soldiers' lives in the desert in Iraq, a medic whose tour there took him one step further than the one I never took to Vietnam, reprieved before boarding the transport flight. Some call it fate.

A warrior in another book returned to see his son for the first time thirty years later in the most incredible place. His son had only known his father

from old pictures, given life by his dreams and visions.

I had a remarkable mother to one hero who made all the difference in her son's life. She mirrors mine, long gone but who saved my life. Then there's the woman protagonist from another book who looked back at me across the dinner table last night. I married her forty-five years ago. No memory is required to write her.



My second novel, "Warriors," is Christian fiction drawing from my experiences and faith. It is a story of a young woman's struggle and stunning discovery, rich in the traditions of Judaism and Christianity.

"Last Act," a novella (sold on Barnes & Noble) is dark humor chronicling the last twenty years in the life of a man who truly discovers the secret of life worth living. "Senior residential living" as you may know it, will never be the same.

Animals figure prominently in the tales I wrote, from exposure to the critters in my own experience which taught me something about their world. I know more about goats and eagles than most people. And falcons, for whom I named a family. All the dogs on my pages are mongrels, like the faithful one from my youth who ran free when dogs could. Wally Lamb writes that mongrels make the best dogs. I was a mongrel too.

You will also find antagonists in the pages drawn from the fount of my acquaintances. Some are victims of circumstances or events, and others of their own doing. Nevertheless, many come around, as did mine, and many of us are the reasons why.

You will always find redemption in my pages, the great force in life, always offered and *sometimes* appropriated. Wise people make good choices. No part

of my life is absent redemption; I see it everywhere, accompanied by a subtle sweet fragrance. You don't know what God is doing while He is doing it.

Humor? Writing is a breakout. All the wild moments and wisecracks over the years almost coalesce in some characters. I have two actors, buddies, in a novella who upended a placid senior home as residents.





Jerry Newport is a lifelong friend, a savant, and a fellow opsimath. He discovered his "differentness" later in life when he was formally identified as Asperger's. He went from driving a taxi in Los Angeles to being an advocate for others similarly gifted. He traveled the globe and his marriage was the subject of a Hollywood film. To me, he was inspiration and the subject of several stories. Jerry in different incarnations.

If you look for worldly locales on my pages, you'll find them. Yet, I remained content to live quietly in a small burg most of my life where at my desk, quieted, I found other fountains of inspiration. I am reminded of Tolkien whose hero Bilbo Baggins is dragged into a series of adventures where he demonstrates courage and growth in a fantasy world. Oddly, Tolkien rarely left his English shire and led a mundane life. Apart from his worldly typewriter.

Willa Cather said it best:

I wrote fiction drawn from life, so the pages of my books tell a true story. Our imaginations are a wellspring of truths if you mine the rich loam of memory and experience. I didn't travel to stay long enough at any one place to change me, but I've read dozens of books that have. I've

seen the vast world in my own town, a microcosm of every place.

Thoreau measured distance "inward and not outward."

Imagination, the fantastical world, is not visited enough. Imagination is the writer's best tool. Who can say definitively that a fictional life cannot mirror a living being? Or can all imagination be true in some other dimension?

I stumbled onto the *secret* only recently, four books and many stories into my life. I was well into my twilight years, nearly two thousand pages packed in a fireproof box, before I realized that my life is serendipitously reflected in all my writing.

My fiction, I discovered, is a perfectly *reheated* hearty stew of ancestor adventures, seasoned with exotic spices from Iraq and Lithuania and ingredients lost to time

preceded by an appetizer of youthful indulgence and a few consequences, the meal sumptuously fulfilled by an array of colorful people walking in and out of my life with an aroma of the Spirit and a tantalized plate of lessons finally learned, and a dessert of living memories unexpectedly falling into place on a laptop in my writer's garret. All and more in a sentence—maybe a book—not big enough to contain all the ingredients. Certainly not a metal box.

And I will never forget the accompanying choice of wine for that meal. All my lifetime's share of tears collected in a wine-making bottle, fermented and aged to perfection. (Psalm 56:8) The best wine in the House!



Ah, memoir. Fiction to every reader, a rear-view mirror to the writer. Perhaps the most emotionally inspired stories— mining that rich loam of experience. Who would have thought life would provide so many stories? Well, it does for many of us. Writing memoir is indeed looking backward and inward, and like that mirror, life appears closer than it was at the time.

Writing memoir is also therapeutic, and sometimes painful, dredging up moments long-forgotten and people and places who have crossed our path. I have forty thousand words written to date.

True stories? *“I can’t swear they’re true, but they’re definitely stories.”* (Cormac McCarthy)

Peter’s inspirational collection can be found here:
www.clarendonhousebooks.com/peter-toeg



“I can’t swear they’re true, but they’re definitely stories.”
(Cormac McCarthy)

On occasion, a profound story is dropped into your lap. Five years ago, I discovered my father's passport, his ticket out of Baghdad, Iraq. He'd fled the monarchy in the 1920s as a man of twenty-four with the promise that America offered. As an Arab Jew, he had been persecuted for his faith as an infidel. On a closer look at the passport, I discovered that he managed to bring both his mother and sister with him listed as "accompanying sister and daughter." A classic identity switch!

My father spirited them out of the land, a secret long-kept from me until forty-five years after his death.

That fact has labeled my father a hero to me and inspired several fictional heroes and a family saga that might never have been written.

Writing is a solitary experience, deeply reflective, and often intense. Becoming an author is a humbling one. I soon realize that not every reader sees the story through my actors' eyes. Any imagined brilliance fades. Yet, I have discovered readers who have found a bit of gold. And shed tears.

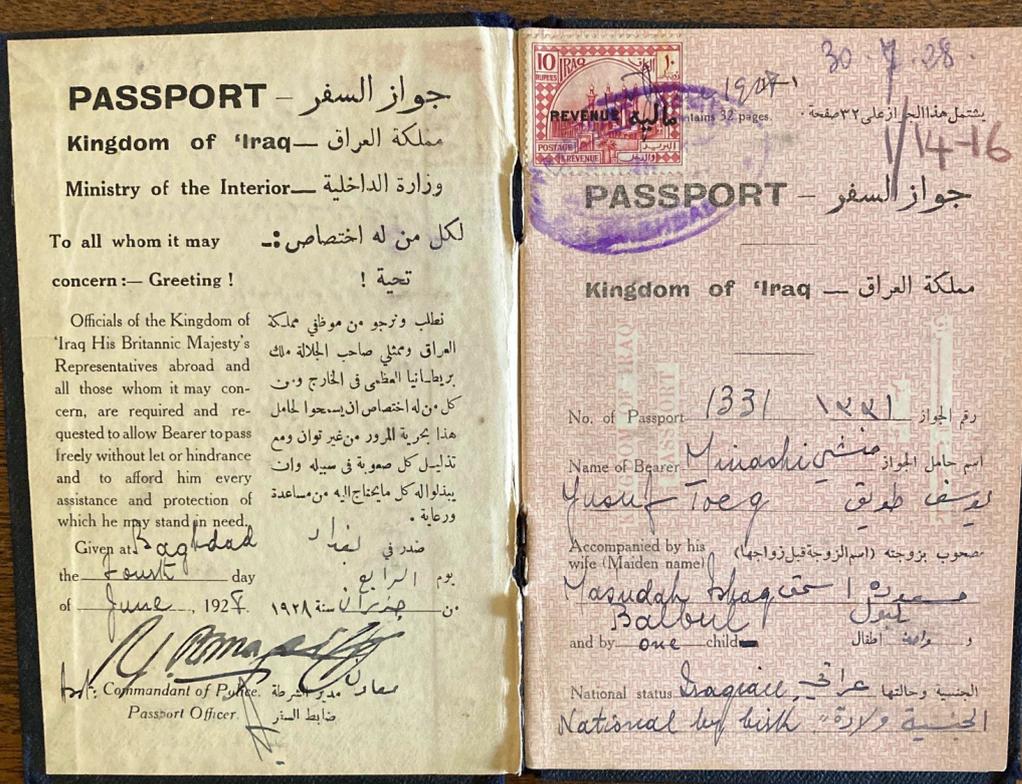
Yes, I want (ed) to do much more. But I am assured someone will do them in my stead. A life incomplete is not a life unfulfilled. I've learned

to distinguish the two. I regularly fall under the spell of C.S. Lewis's non-fiction (isn't fiction non-fiction if you ponder that?) and enjoy the rest, pleasure, and knowledge, in part, of the same God we serve.

No capstone yet. No gravestone, either.

As to critics and word quotas, consider the limited measure we are given of so many of life's other attributes. Like patience, tolerance, wisdom, recall, hair, chocolate, and wonder. Yes, wonder!

I learned one more thing. And that is the...



My father's passport granting him escape from persecution in Iraq in the 1920s. Joseph the Arab-Jew. I discovered his story of escape and subterfuge long after he died. The tell-tale passport showed he spirited his mother and sister out of the monarchy by recording them as his "wife" and "daughter" to accompany him. He is the subject of several memoir chapters in what now totals forty thousand words.

CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

PETER TOEG



LOVE & FATE



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GARY BONN

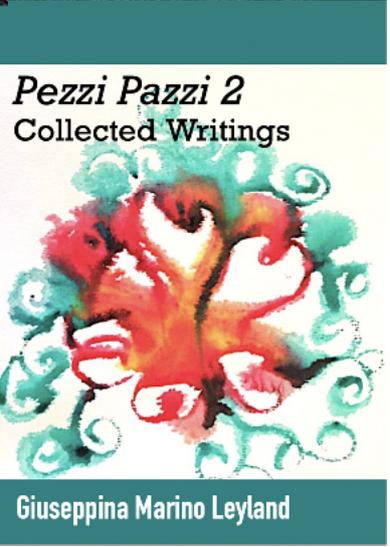
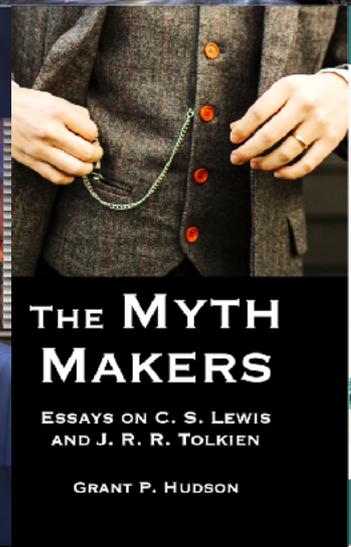
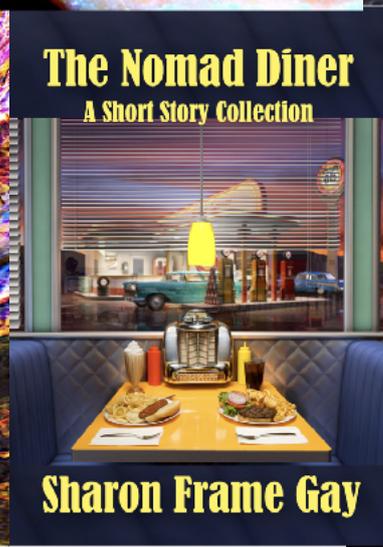
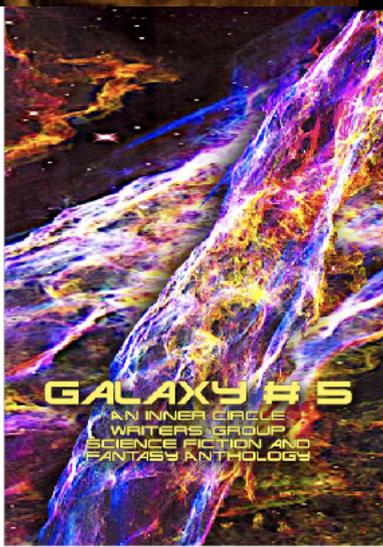
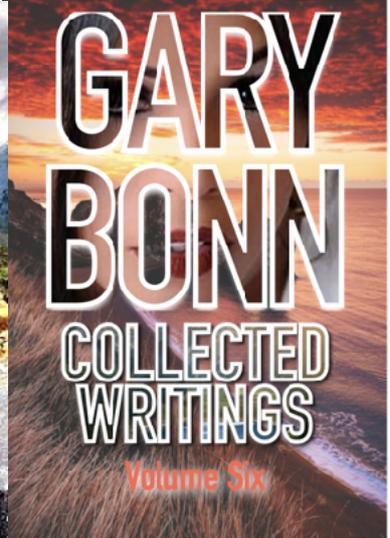
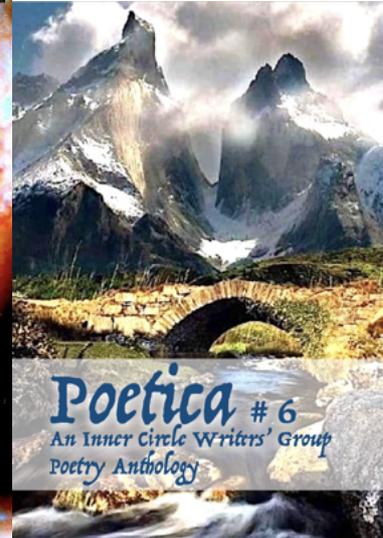
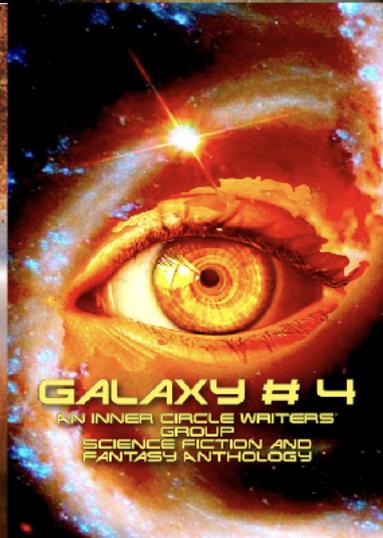
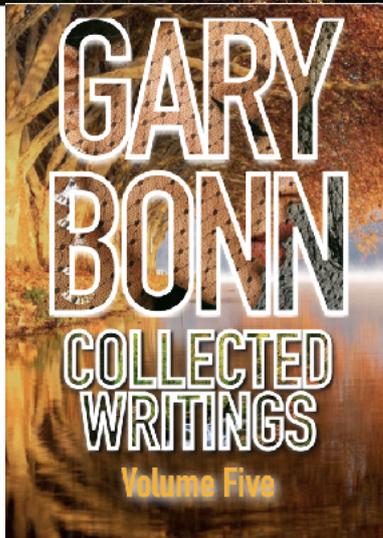
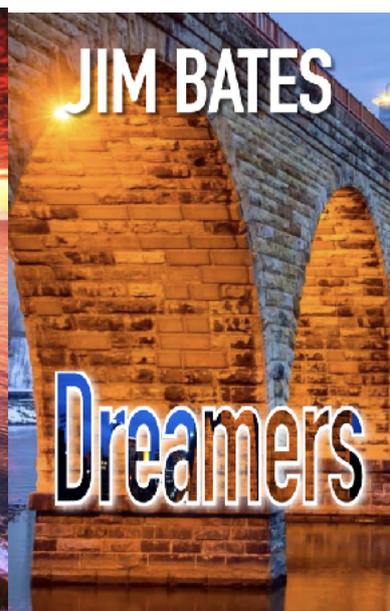
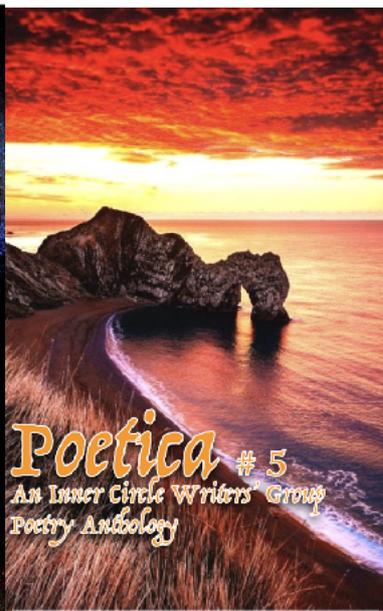
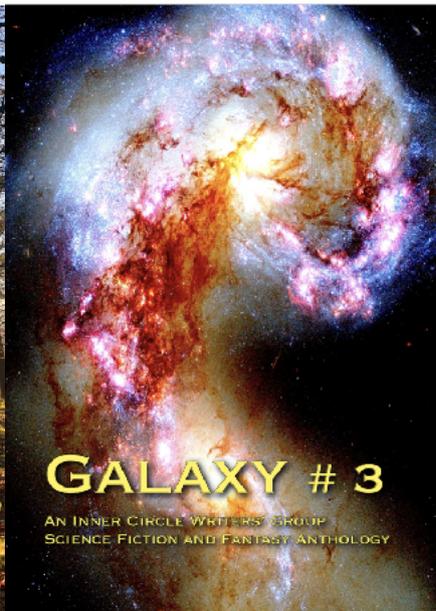
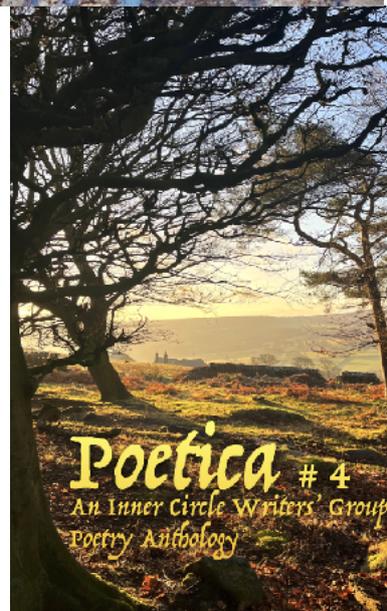
COLLECTED WRITINGS

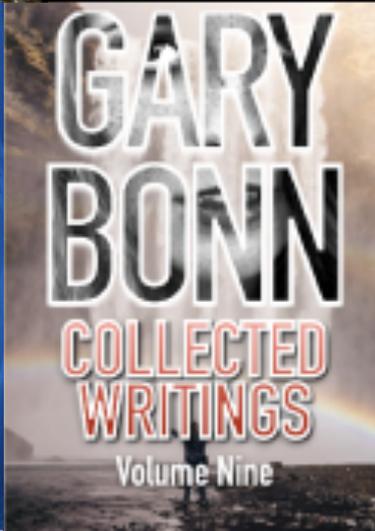
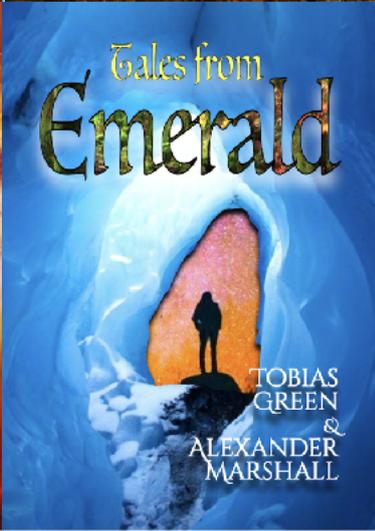
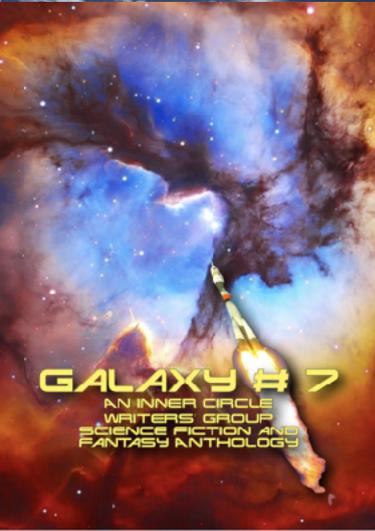
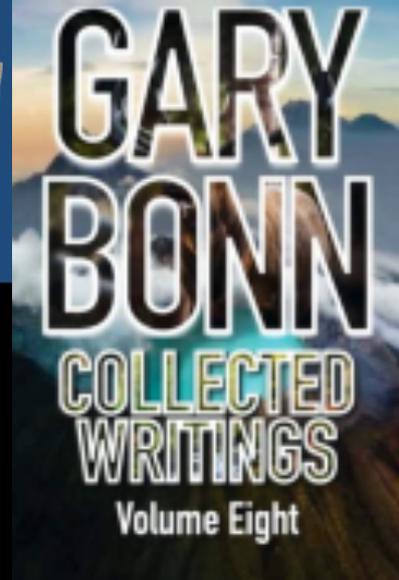
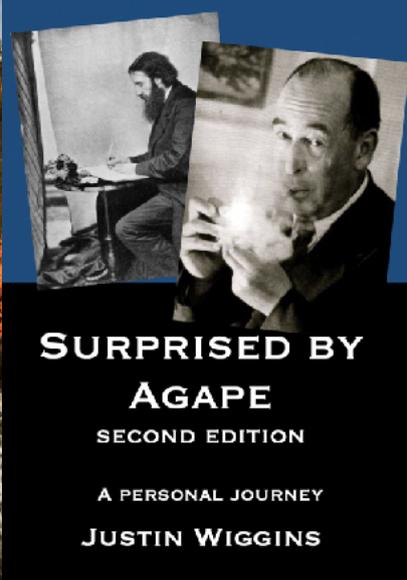
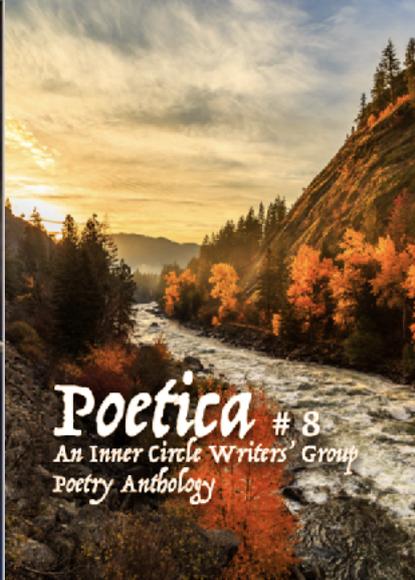
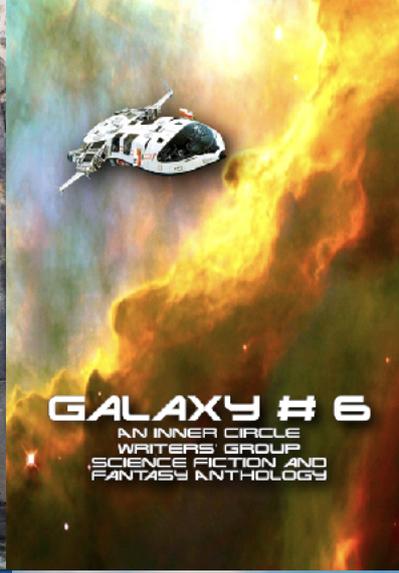
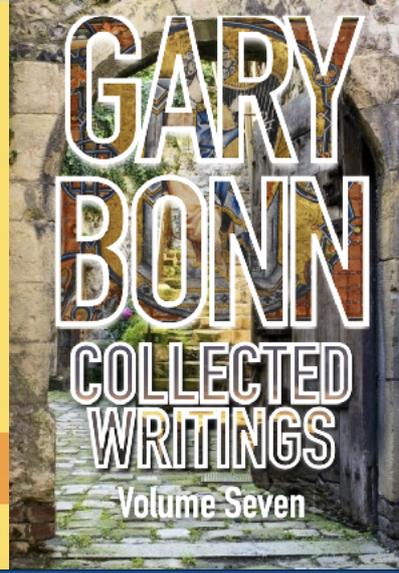
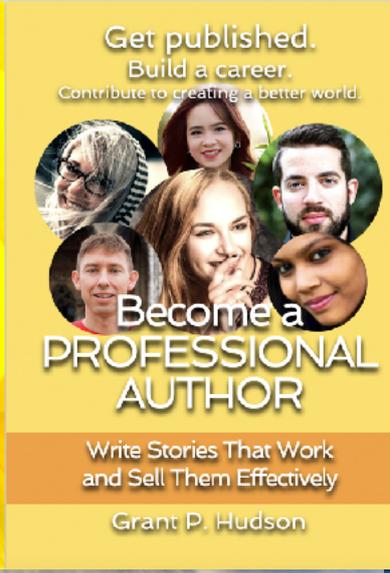
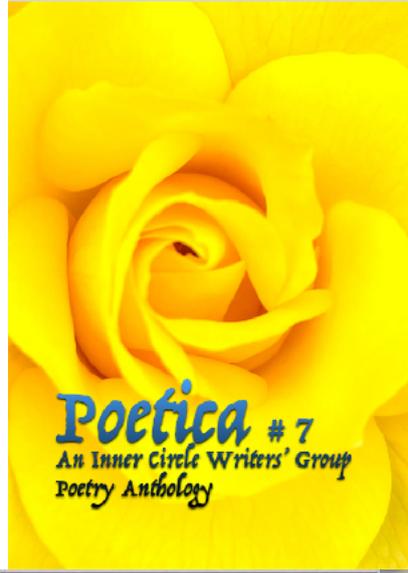
Volume Four

2022 Clarendon House Cover of the Year

Clarendon House has published 40 separate books and magazine issues so far in 2022 (not including the massive 14 modules of the Become a Professional Author Course). Of these,

25 have been books. Just for fun — and because I am interested in your feedback — I'd like you to select which of the covers in the following document most appeal to you.





You can just give me your number 1 choice if you wish, or you can elaborate on why you prefer certain covers if you have time.

Click on the cover image to find out more or to take a closer look at each cover.

Them if you wish, drop me a line with your thoughts:

grant@clarendonhousebooks.com

Here's to a 2023 full of wonder!

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**

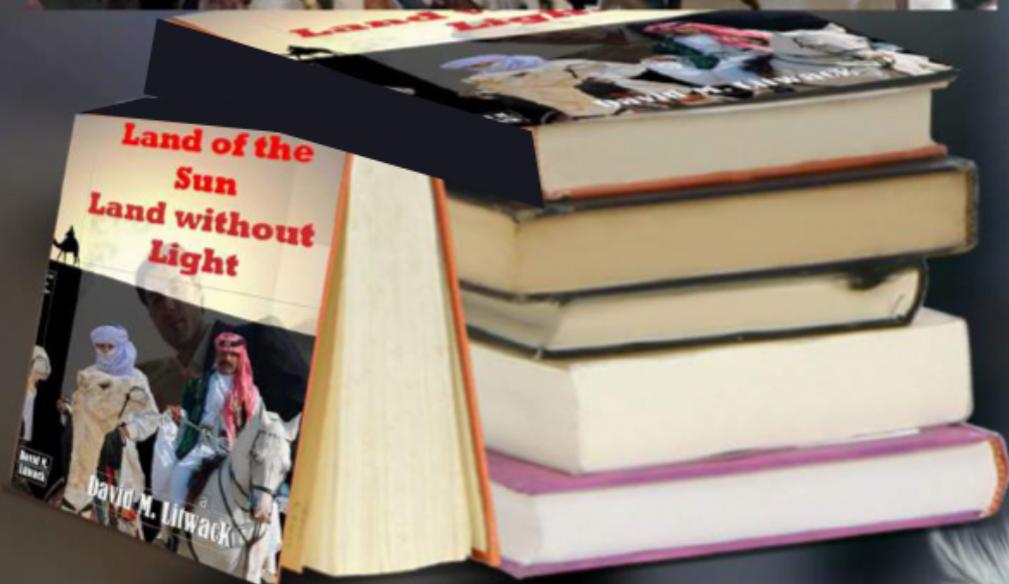
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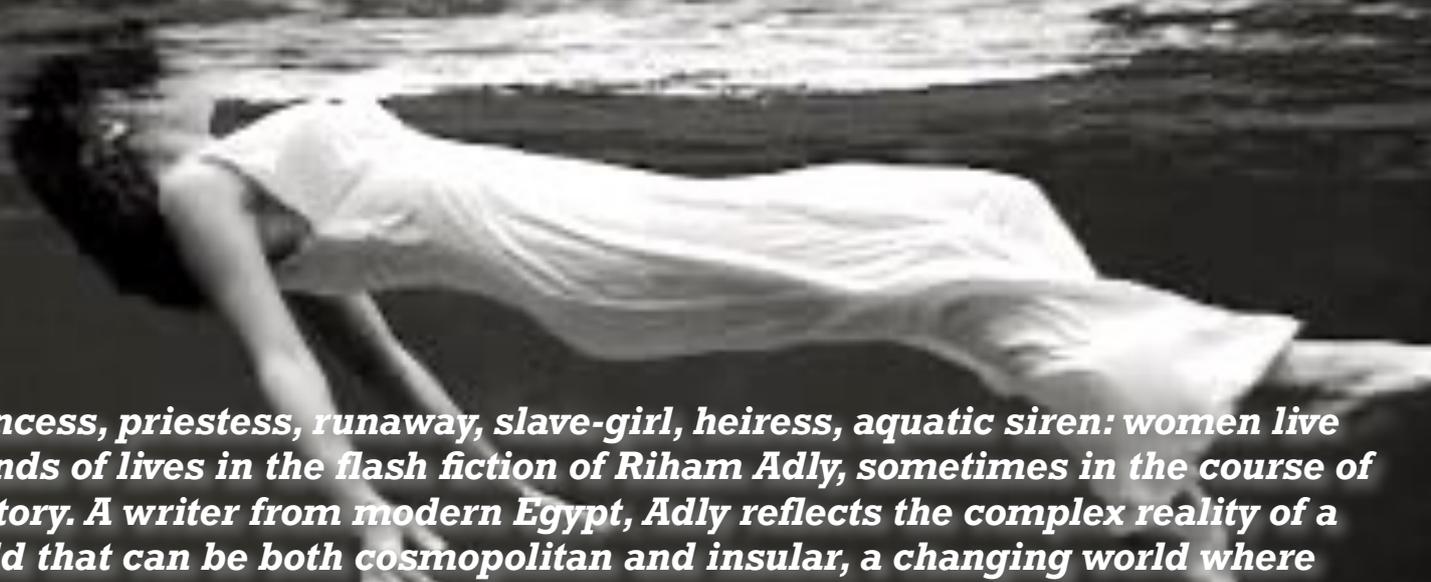
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CLARENDON HOUSE AUTHOR

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.

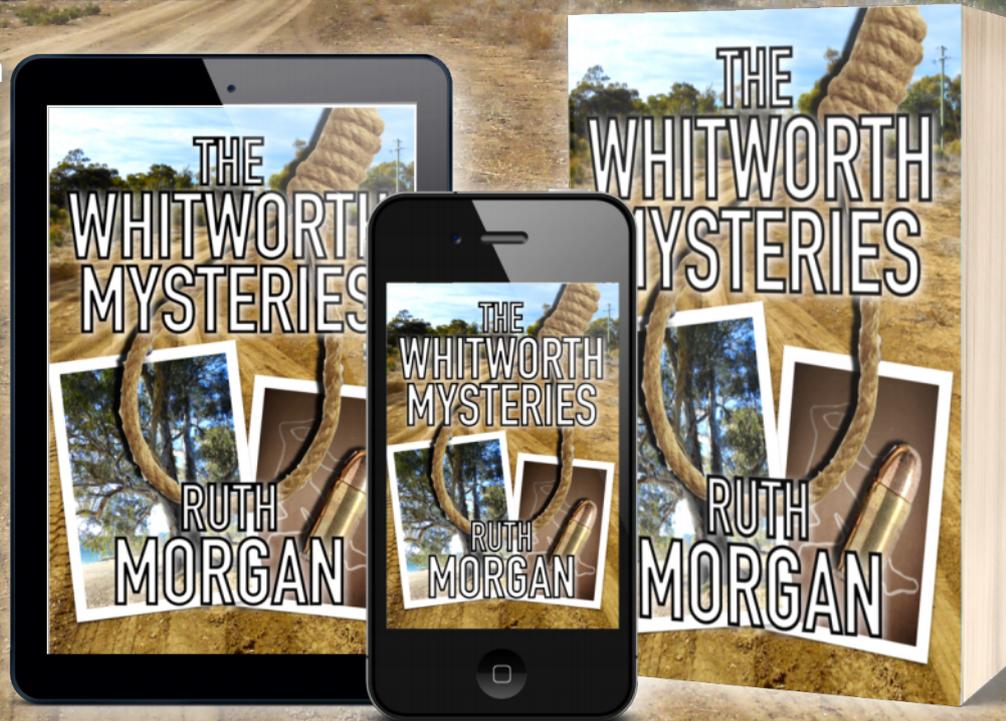
“Never point a loaded gun at anyone, unless you mean to kill them.”

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

A LITERALLY LITERARY QUIZ

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



1. Which novel by Winifred Holtby is set in a fictional county in the north of England in the 1930s?
2. What is the name of Roger Zelazny's protagonist in the *Chronicles of Amber* series?
3. What is the name of Ransom's antagonist in the second volume of C. S. Lewis's Ransom trilogy?
4. Who says 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be' in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*?
5. What cartoon featured a character who gained superhuman strength from eating spinach?
6. Where is the Batcave located?
7. What is the name of the whaling ship in *Moby Dick*?
8. Who is the only truly super-powered character in Alan Moore's classic graphic novel *Watchmen*?
9. Which English poet wrote *Paradise Lost*?
10. What is the name of the dog in Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* series?

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

Answers to last month's questions:

1. Which famous American novel is set in New York in the Jazz Age and features a woman called Daisy Buchanan? ***The Great Gatsby***
2. Which character appears as if by miracle in the Old Forest in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and rescues the hobbits? **Tom Bombadil**
3. What is the name of the narrator in the short story "The Yellow Wallpaper"? **Jane**
4. Complete this quote from Stephen King: "If you want to be a writer, you must do two things above all others: _____ and write a lot." **read a lot**
5. What cartoon character said "Suffering succotash"? **Sylvester the cat**
6. What is the original headquarters of the Fantastic Four in Marvel Comics? **The Baxter Building**
7. What is the name of the island where wizards are sent to train in Ursula K. Le Guin's classic book *A Wizard of Earthsea*? **Roke**
8. Who is the protagonist of the novel *Les Miserables*? **Jean Valjean**
9. Which English poet wrote Songs of Innocence and Experience? **William Blake**
10. What is the setting for the opening of the story *Don Quixote*? **La Mancha, Spain**



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 ELIZABETH BAILEY

Elizabeth Bailey grew up in Africa with unconventional parents, where she loved reading and drama. On returning to England, she developed her career in acting, theatre directing and finally writing. Elizabeth's latest venture is The Lady Fan Mystery series, published by Sapere Books. The novels feature amateur sleuth Lady Ottilia Fanshawe and a cast of family members including her husband and champion Lord Francis Fanshawe. She originally published Regency romances with Harlequin Mills & Boon and has many titles in her Brides by Chance Regency Adventures series, now also published by Sapere, as well as standalone Regency and Georgian romances. Elizabeth also writes edgy women's fiction: Her dual time novel *Fly The Wild Echoes*, which deals with past lives, and *For One More Tomorrow*, where the ghost of the real Macbeth returns, protesting his villainous portrayal by Shakespeare. And she has published a romantic suspense novella, *Silence of a Stranger*.

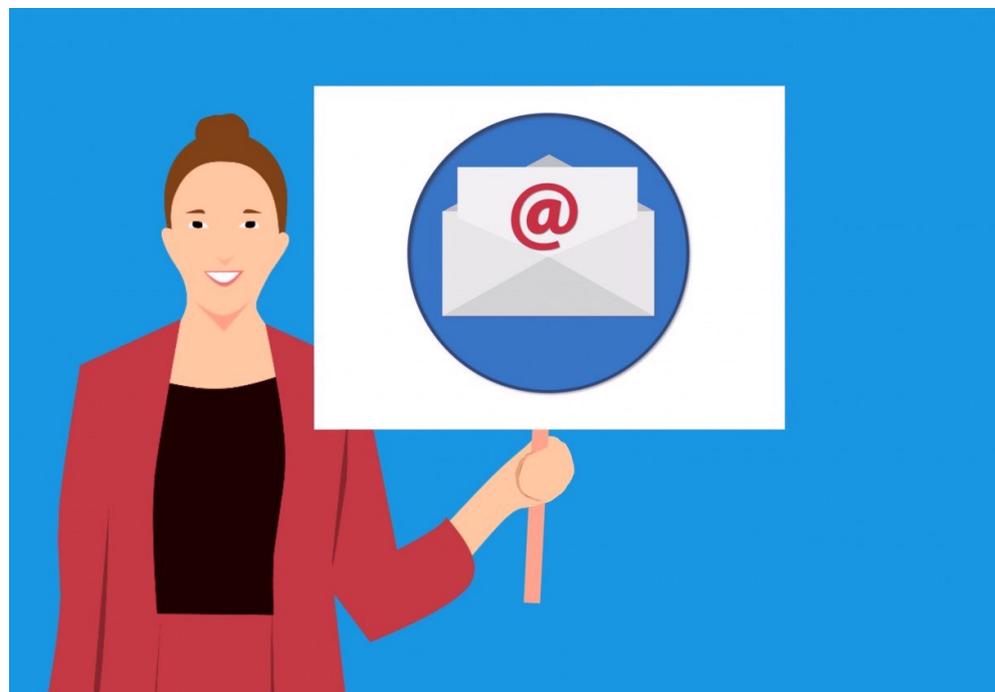


Elizabeth lives in Sussex, England. She is still an inveterate reader with eclectic tastes and she spends her spare time helping other writers improve their craft.

Hosting

I recommend Mailerlite rather than Mailchimp. It's a lot easier and it's based in Europe, which means the chat helpers are more likely to be around when we need them. They have updated it since I started and (being something of a technophobe) I just carry on doing my old style newsletters because I can't stand the learning curve of new programs. But they are very good at making easy to understand videos that show you how to do things.

How To Start A NEWSLETTER And Build Subscribers



One huge advantage with Mailerlite is that you can schedule your newsletters to be sent by Time Zone, so readers get them at the time you decide wherever they are in the world.

There are other platforms and you can host on your website, but frankly, it's a lot simpler to have someone else take the headache out of it and let them run the sending etc. It's not very expensive either. I have a plan up to 10,000 names and only pay around EUR34 a month. It's free to start, but you begin a payment plan when you reach a certain level.

What you need

The host (Mailerlite) will provide everything you need (except subscribers). This is just the basic. There are plenty of upgradeable things you can do, but I don't. I keep it simple.

A newsletter template.
A landing page for sign-ups.
An automation response for sign-ups.
A sign-up link.
Subscribers.

Newsletter template

You will be able to set one up using the tools available. [Note: Because I use an old one, all I do is copy the last newsletter I sent, delete everything and start over. I haven't learned to use the new program so I can't just start a

new newsletter using my chosen template.]

I use a banner across the top, but this is optional. It personalises the letter so everyone recognises it's yours, and I've been using the same Regency-themed image for years.

Colours, fonts and so on are up to you. You can add images easily, which you upload (they remain there so you can use again unless you delete them). You can also add video and such things as questionnaires, but I don't do any of that.

Landing page

You make one on the site with a template they provide. This is where your would-be subscriber lands when they click on your sign-up link. It will take them through the process of subscribing and the host will add them and send your automation response.

Automation response

You set this up on the site. It's simply a thank you for joining email, in which you can introduce yourself, provide links to your various social media presences, website, Amazon page, etc.





Subscribers

That's a whole ballgame in itself and pretty much what the rest of this data will cover.

Getting Subscribers

There are a number of ways to build a list of subscribers. As stated above, put the link wherever you might find a potential subscriber, on social media etc. If you have a website, inviting visitors to join your newsletter is a good idea.

You can also do swaps with other writers in your genre. You share their book, they share yours.

However, by far the best way to get subscribers is to join "list-building" promos or competitions. There are several organisations that run these. Some are free, others cost anything up to \$60 or so. \$30 is fairly standard.

You can also advertise quite cheaply in newsletters run by organisations who offer free, bargain and new release promos to their reader lists. This is a good place to offer your freebie.

Aside note: most of these organisations are in the States. I use PayPal for all such payments. It's far easier and safer than putting your bank details online and most of them have the PayPal option.

This is where you will also include a link to a freebie, if you provide one. See Freebie heading on this.

Sign-up link

The host will provide this. You can use it on all your social media pages, website, back matter in your books, anywhere where you might hope to attract a subscriber. You can also use it for swaps, competitions, etc.

How to attract subscribers – THE FREEBIE

Some sort of freebie is almost mandatory. This is called a “magnet”. Without a magnet, readers have no incentive to join your newsletter.

Lots of unscrupulous readers will join just to get the freebie and then unsubscribe. Par for the course and to be ignored. You aren’t interested in such subscribers. You want to build a core readership of dedicated subscribers who like your writing and want more.

What can you use for a freebie magnet?

Ideally, if you happen to be a prolific author just starting out on the newsletter game, you could offer a whole book. But this isn’t essential.

For example, I have one book which is permafrees, and which I use as a “funnel”. I don’t need it so much now but when I started, promoting the funnel, in which there is a sign-up link, worked quite well. You get some conversions this way, but at the start it costs. Nowadays, it’s a lot simpler to use “list builders” in promo emails.

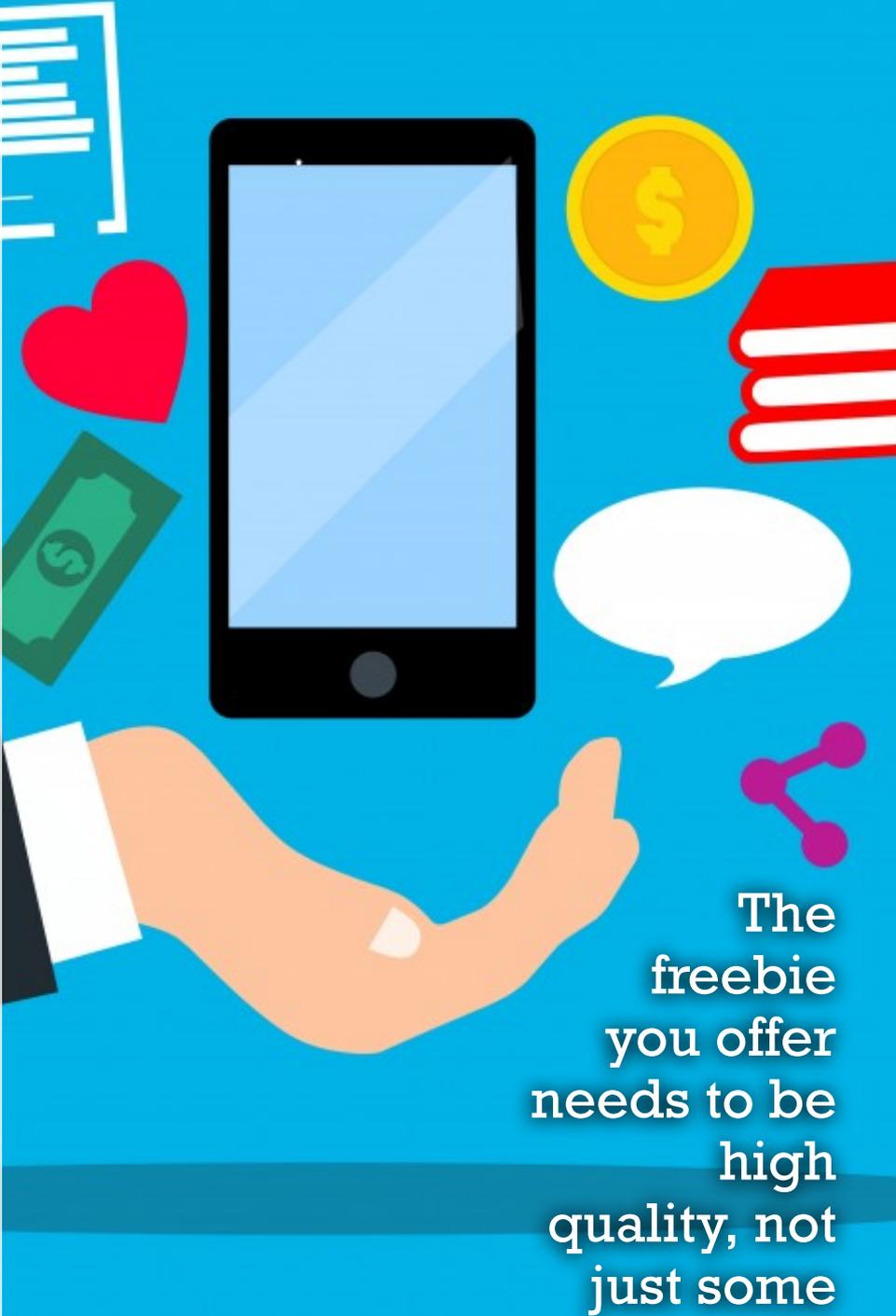
I also have a book which is ONLY free to new subscribers. Otherwise it’s on sale at normal price. This is my “magnet”.

Here are some ideas for a freebie:

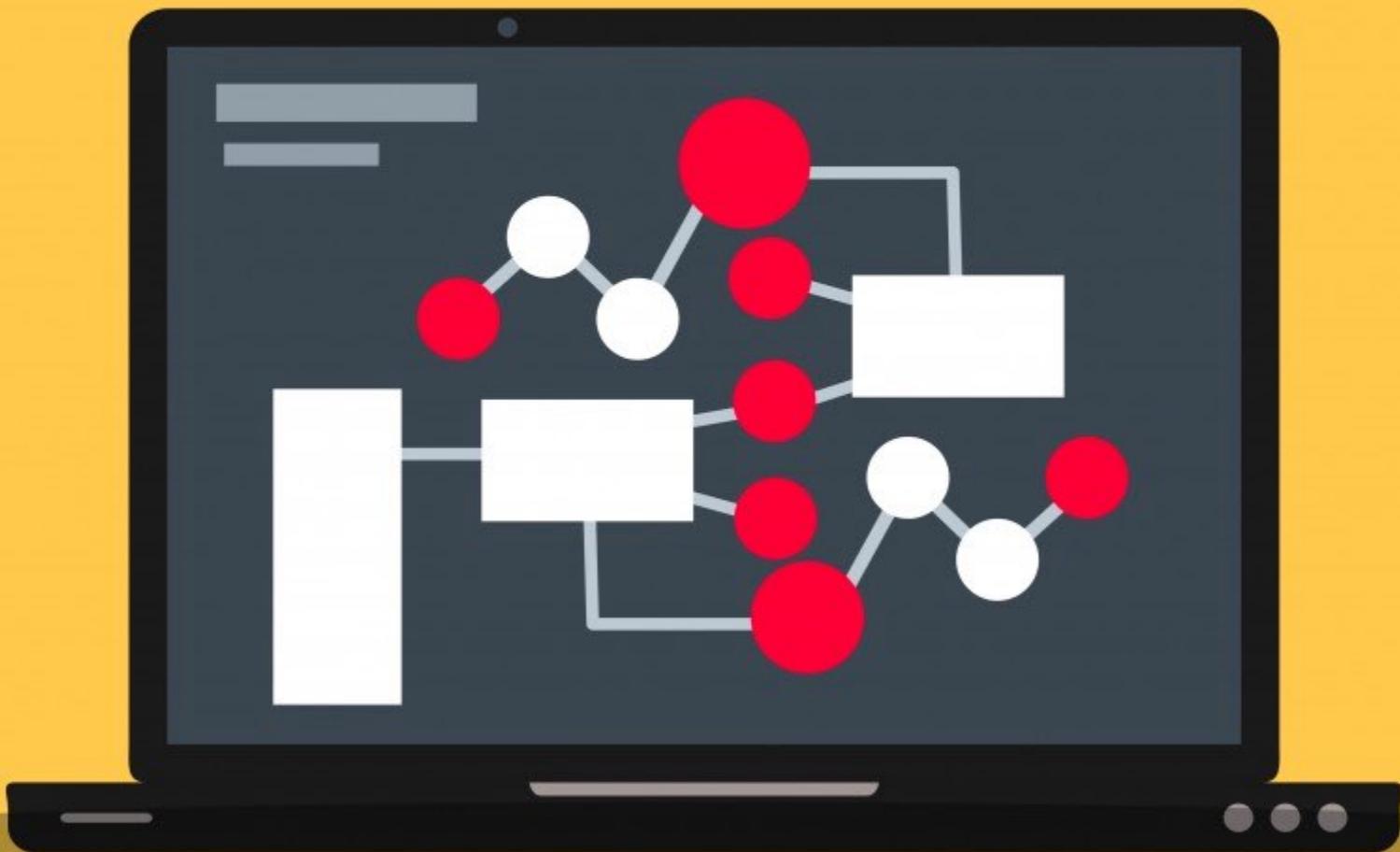
- A short story (which shows your style and preferably your genre)
- Sample chapters from the beginning of the book (to whet their appetite if you have only one)

- Research material that might be interesting for readers of your genre

Important note: The freebie you offer needs to be high quality, not just some old manuscript you have lying around. Its objective is to make people want to buy your books, so it needs to be a good piece of writing, whether a whole book, a sample or a short story.



The freebie you offer needs to be high quality, not just some old manuscript you have lying around.



The best list-building opportunities

Booksweeps at <https://www.booksweeps.com/authors/>

This platform is far and away the best platform for growing your list. I use it a couple of times a year for this purpose, and sometimes to grow my Bookbub following.

Booksweeps do everything for you. You just join one of their genre-specific competitions. It costs around \$50-\$60, but it's well worth it. You will

generate anything up to 500 subscribers in one hit. Their competitions only give a winner and runner-up prize, so you are only giving away two books – you can send either e-book or print. The winner gets all the books entered plus an e-reader. The runner-up gets all the books.

They run these comps all year, and you grab your chance the moment a new list comes out, usually for three months or so ahead. They go fast, so it's best to be on the ball. You can join Premium for an annual fee and

get in earlier than the general public, but you don't need to. I've run books in Booksweeps for several years before finally joining up last year.

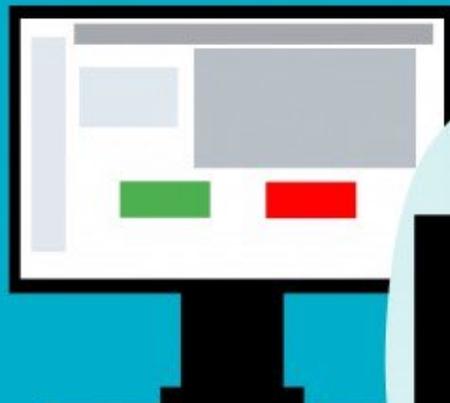
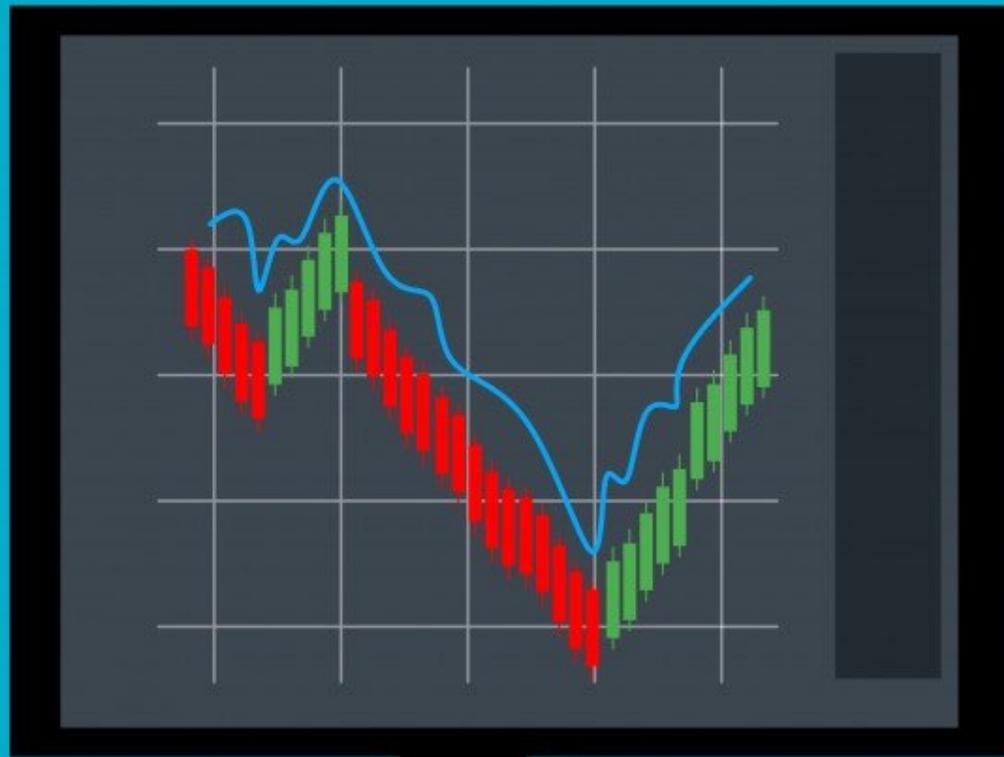
Once you have entered and paid, Booksweeps will send you all the promotional material plus instructions how best to make use of it. After the Booksweeps ends (they run for about 10 days) they will send you a list of subscribers which you can add to your list on Mailerlite.

Authors XP (AXP) at <https://authorsxp.com/for-authors/author-land?idU=1>

Mailing list builder at <https://authorsxp.com/mlb>
This one is pretty good too, and costs a bit less. It's worth working through a different platform sometimes because you may get a different set of readers. They also run a lot of other promo opps, but we are interested in building a list.

The downside to AXP is it's sometimes difficult to understand the entry form. Be prepared to look it over carefully and make sure to insert everything asked for.

Book Cave <https://mybookcave.com/authorsandpublishers/>
This one is free or very cheap. Also pretty good. You have to join up and the process to add your book(s) is a bit complex, the form is long and detailed. Once added, you can use the book as a "magnet" via their site by joining a joint promotion.





Get onto their mailing list so you get notice of what's upcoming. You can also set up a joint promotion yourself. A good thing about this one is you can opt to have sign-ups happen directly to Mailerlite, so you don't have to add subscribers yourself. However, you will be giving away a lot of free books, so bear that in mind.

There are other platforms where you can join joint promotion efforts like these,

but I have found the best success with the above.

How often should you send a newsletter?

This is entirely up to you. Some authors send once a month, others once a week or once a fortnight. Still others only send when they have a new release or pre-order.

I recommend sending at least bi-monthly, or once a month. At the risk of getting

spammy, you don't want the readers to forget that they signed up. Equally, you don't want to be an author who only tries to sell. You want to build a relationship with your readers, let them find out who you are.

There are other things you can do with a newsletter besides promoting your book(s).

So what do you put in your newsletters?

First off, make the style your own. The more chatty, friendly and normal you can sound, the better. It's a bit like writing a blog. This is you talking to your readers, so it works to be yourself.

You don't have to tell them your life story, but it does help if you are a real person to them and letting them know about day-to-day trials and tribulations as well as triumphs is always a good way to draw them in.

You can swap with other writers in similar genres, and flag up their book in your newsletter, by which means

you can build new readers too when they share your book. You can recommend books you have read, even films you have seen. You can talk about your childhood reads, or what your children enjoy (if you have any).

Obviously, you want to let readers know about upcoming releases, but you don't want the newsletter to be sell, sell, sell. That won't make them come back. Along with your news about what's upcoming, tell them about what's happening in your life (apart from what you don't want to share, of course).

I often write about frustrations of life. For example, how I've been stopped from writing

this week because of some "life" incident that's cropped up. I write about the writing process, the writing life. I tell them about my trips to Hungary for oxygen baths. I say if I'm going crackers because of some tecchie problem I've had a lot of trouble with. I will talk about upcoming celebrations or seasonal changes – incessant rain, excessive heat, Easter, bank holidays, Christmas, Halloween, etc. I talk about differences between here in the UK and across the pond (where I have a lot of subscribers). I talk about the problems that arise because of age.





There is always something you can reference that your readers will be able to connect with. If you have a family, there are bound to be things you can discuss. Funny incidents, exciting occasions. Basically, you can talk about anything that makes you as human as your readers.

What this does is give the reader the feeling that they are in a club which is exclusive between them and the author they admire. You are providing them with something the ordinary reader does not get. Give them sneak preview

snippets from an upcoming book, say. A few lines of dialogue, the title you've decided on, the cover. Make sure to tell them it's only for them. This can make them feel privileged and special.

Always use "you" when you are talking to your readers. I try always to write as if I am talking to one person. Occasionally this is impossible, but it's something I bear in mind.

Images

Always include an image of a book you are promoting, whether your own or

someone else's. But if you aren't promoting a book at all, you can always include an image of some kind. From life, or an illustration that picks up on something you have talked about.

How do you write without seeming to sell?

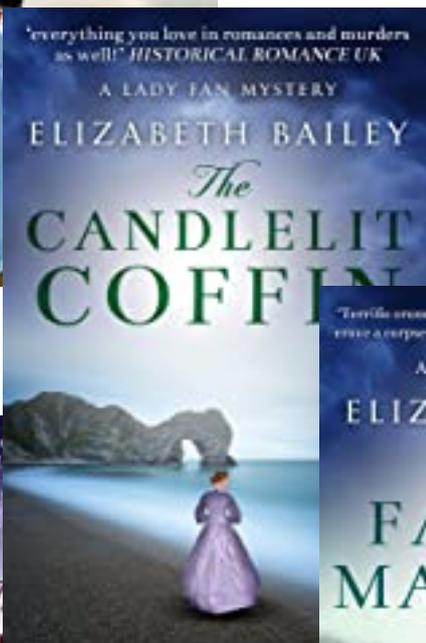
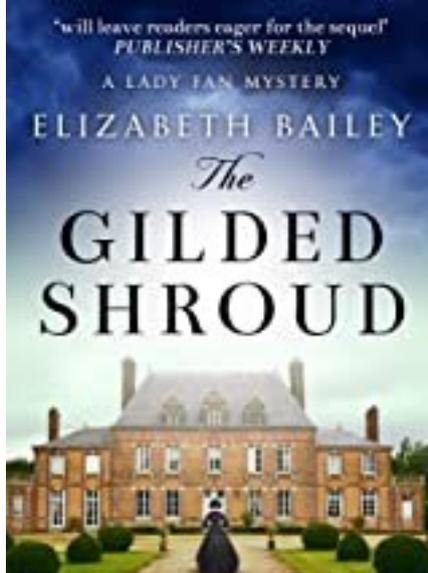
This is quite a trick. All of the above applies. But you can also keep the idea of a future sale in the mix by talking about how the writing is going or the publishing is going.

Some examples:

“Still waiting for ye Ed to send me the proofs to edit. I’m getting a bit antsy here because there isn’t much time before my trip to Hungary. Yikes! Will I be able to get it done in time?”

“You know I said I was writing Lady Fan every day. Haha! Life will keep interfering, right? Not only was I headached out on one day, but an unsuspected relative cropped up and took up the whole of another. I mean, lovely to see her, of course, but hey – I’m trying to get a book written here.”

See what I mean? Because my Lady Fan Mystery series is my main focus, and I know that a lot of my subscribers are only interested in that, and not historical romance, I always slip in a sentence or two about where the latest one is at or the progress of the one “in the pipeline at the publishers”. It just keeps it there, but it isn’t direct selling.



How do you “sell” using your newsletter?

The best approach is to start building your subscribers ahead of your book coming out. You then get a chance to build interest for those who sign up. If you already have a backlist of books, you will be introducing yourself and your books to new subscribers.

As time goes on and you have a new book coming out, use your newsletter to build momentum and interest. Share intriguing little snippets. Let them see the cover ahead of launch, if you can. Be excited yourself and that will excite them.

If you are writing a series (as I do), you can also drop hints about what might be in the new book you are writing. I’ve told readers I’m putting Lady Fan through the mill, for example. Or I’ll mention that a favourite character from an earlier book is coming back. Anything that might intrigue the reader so that they get the idea fixed in their mind that they will want the next book when it comes out.

Always send a newsletter to arrive on launch day, because that will remind them to go and buy. Especially true if

there is a pre-launch lower price, which will go up within a few days of launch.

And that’s about it

I hope you can see it isn’t nearly as complicated as it seems at first. The set-up is probably the most difficult part. Once that is done, you can take your time to build up the rest.

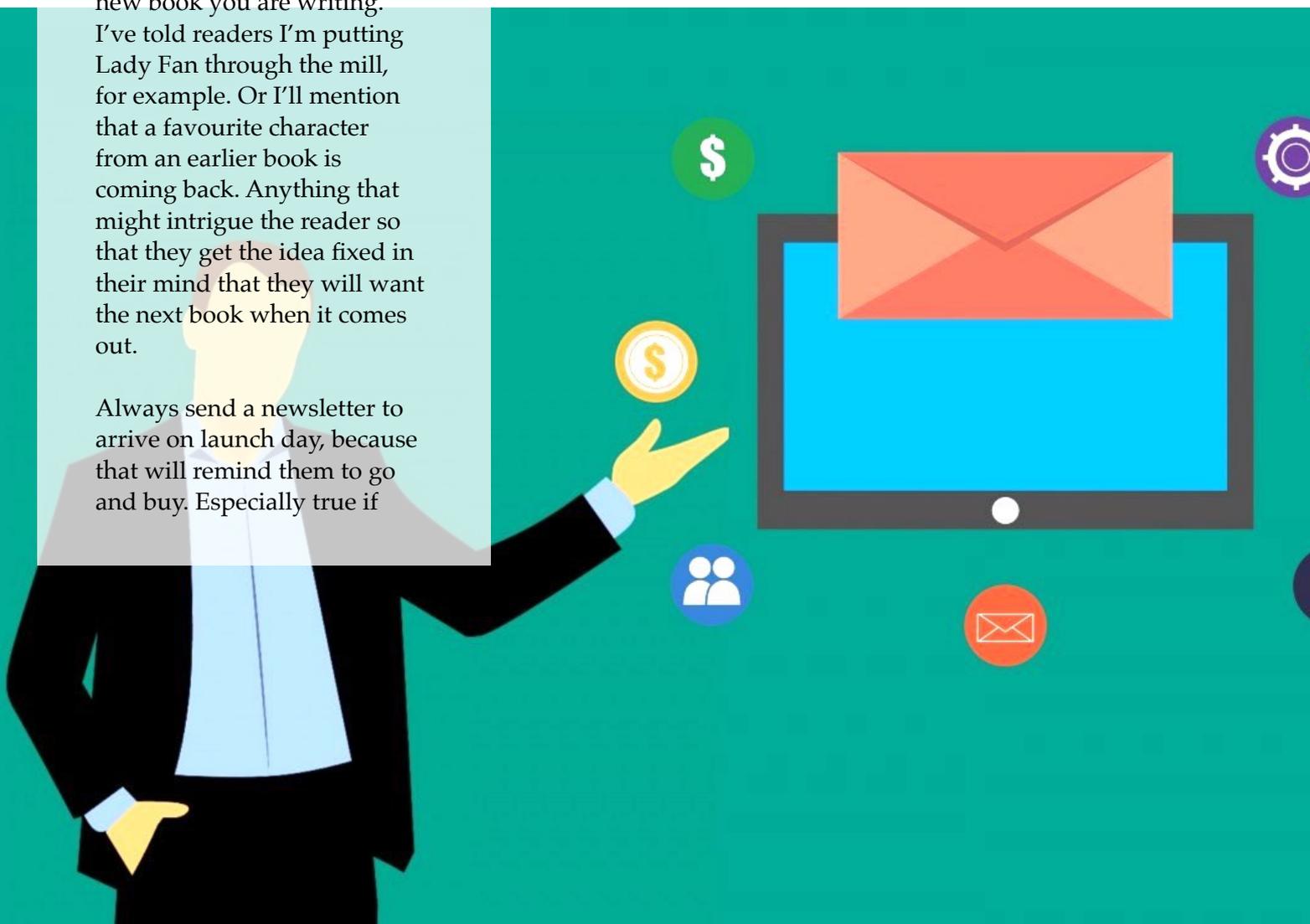
The best advice I can give is always to provide some interesting chat about yourself as well as anything you might be promoting. Your subscribers are there because they like your books. Your newsletter works to get them to like you as well. Faithful readers become faithful friends.

One last thing: assuming you give them an email in your newsletter so they can write to you (I use a dedicated one attached to my website), always answer personally. It takes less than a minute to respond to whatever they have said and to thank them for taking the trouble to write. Some readers will write often and become newsletter “friends” to you.

Good luck!

Elizabeth Bailey

Elizabeth’s books can be found [here](#).



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*.

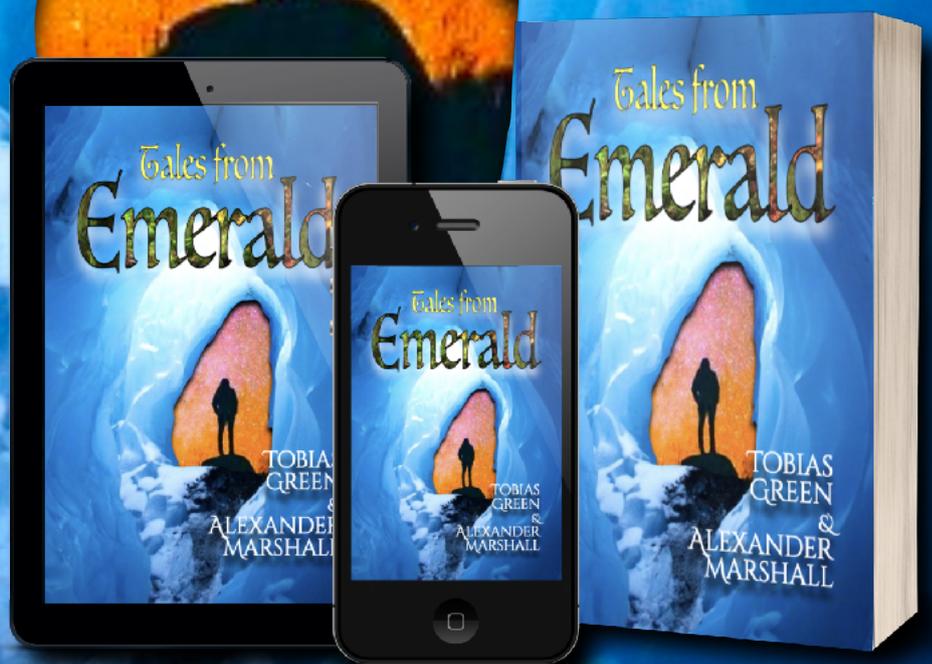
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Tales from Emerald

TOBIAS GREEN
&
ALEXANDER MARSHALL



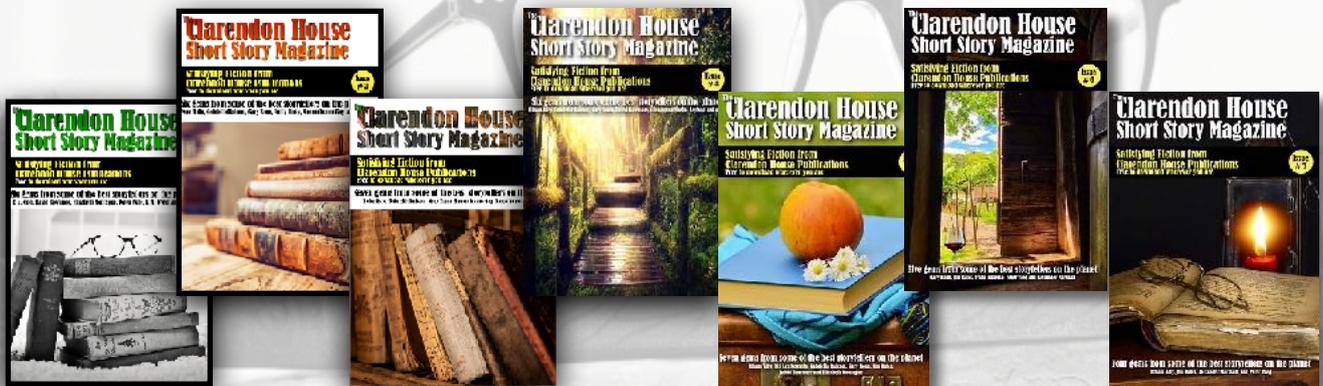
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MEL LEE NEWMIN



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.

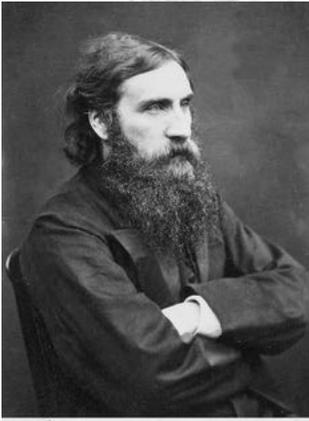
When expert linguist and political rebel Daj Dimarco is press-ganged into the desperate diplomatic mission charged with ending the aggression, he has little hope of ever returning to his former life on Earth. But when an unexpected confrontation with a member of his own crew suddenly flings him into 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 17: Diamond Goes On

Diamond became a great favourite with all the men about the mews. Some may think it was not the best place in the world for him to be brought up in; but it must have been, for there he was. At first, he heard a good many rough and bad words; but he did not like them, and so they did him little harm. He did not know in the least what they meant, but there was something in the very sound of them, and in the tone of voice in which they were said, which Diamond felt to be ugly. So they did not even stick to him, not to say get inside him. He never took any notice of them, and his face shone pure and good in the middle of them, like a primrose in a hailstorm. At first, because his face was so quiet and sweet, with a

smile always either awake or asleep in his eyes, and because he never heeded their ugly words and rough jokes, they said he wasn't all there, meaning that he was half an idiot, whereas he was a great deal more there than they had the sense to see. And before long the bad words found themselves ashamed to come out of the men's mouths when Diamond was near. The one would nudge the other to remind him that the boy was within hearing, and the words choked themselves before they got any farther. When they talked to him nicely he had always a good answer, sometimes a smart one, ready, and that helped much to make them change their minds about him.

One day Jack gave him a curry-comb and a brush to try his hand upon old Diamond's coat. He used them so deftly, so gently, and yet so thoroughly, as far as he could reach, that the man could not help admiring him.

“You must make haste and, grow,” he said. “It won't do to have a horse's belly clean and his back dirty, you know.”

“Give me a leg,” said Diamond, and in a moment he was on the old horse's back with the comb and brush. He sat on his withers, and reaching forward as he ate his hay, he curried and he brushed, first at one side of his neck, and then at the other. When that was done he asked for a dressing-comb, and combed his mane thoroughly. Then he pushed himself on to his back, and did his shoulders as far down as he could reach. Then he sat on his croup, and did

his back and sides; then he turned around like a monkey, and attacked his hind-quarters, and combed his tail. This last was not so easy to manage, for he had to lift it up, and every now and then old Diamond would whisk it out of his hands, and once he sent the comb flying out of the stable door, to the great amusement of the men. But Jack fetched it again, and Diamond began once more, and did not leave off until he had done the whole business fairly well, if not in a first-rate, experienced fashion. All the time the old horse went on eating his hay, and, but with an occasional whisk of his tail when Diamond tickled or scratched him, took no notice of the proceeding. But that was all a pretence, for he knew very well who it was that was perched on his back, and rubbing away at him with the comb and the brush. So he was quite pleased and proud, and perhaps said to himself something like this--



"I'm a stupid old horse, who can't brush his own coat; but there's my young godson on my back, cleaning me like an angel."

I won't vouch for what the old horse was thinking, for it is very difficult to find out what any old horse is thinking.

"Oh dear!" said Diamond when he had done, "I'm so tired!"

And he laid himself down at full length on old Diamond's back.

By this time all the men in the stable were gathered about the two Diamonds, and all much amused. One of them lifted him down, and from that time he was a greater favourite than before. And if ever there was a boy who had a chance of being a prodigy at cab-driving, Diamond was that boy, for the strife came to be who should have him out with him on the box.





His mother, however, was a little shy of the company for him, and besides she could not always spare him. Also his father liked to have him himself when he could; so that he was more desired than enjoyed among the cabmen.

But one way and another he did learn to drive all sorts of horses, and to drive them well, and that through the most crowded streets in London City. Of course there was the man always on the box-seat beside him, but before long there was seldom the least occasion to take the reins from out of his hands. For one thing he never got frightened, and consequently was never in too great a hurry. Yet when the moment came for doing something sharp, he was always ready for it. I must once more remind my readers that he had been to the back of the north wind.

One day, which was neither washing-day, nor cleaning-day nor marketing-day, nor Saturday, nor Monday--upon which consequently Diamond could be spared from the baby--his father took him on his own cab. After a stray job or two by the way, they drew up in the row upon the stand between Cockspur Street and Pall Mall. They waited a long time, but nobody seemed to want to be carried anywhere. By and by ladies would be going home from the Academy exhibition, and then there would be a chance of a job.

“Though, to be sure,” said Diamond's father—with what truth I cannot say, but he believed what he said—“some ladies is very hard, and keeps you to the bare sixpence a mile, when every one knows that ain't enough to keep a family and a cab upon. To be sure it's the law; but mayhap they may get more law than they like some day themselves.”

As it was very hot, Diamond's father got down to have a glass of beer himself, and give another to the old waterman. He left Diamond on the box.

A sudden noise got up, and Diamond looked round to see what was the matter.

There was a crossing near the cab-stand, where a girl was sweeping. Some rough young imps had picked a quarrel with her, and were now hauling at her broom to get it away from her. But as they did not pull all together, she was holding it against them, scolding and entreating alternately.



Diamond was off his box in a moment, and running to the help of the girl. He got hold of the broom at her end and pulled along with her. But the boys proceeded to rougher measures, and one of them hit Diamond on the nose, and made it bleed; and as he could not let go the broom to mind his nose, he was soon a dreadful figure. But presently his father came back, and missing Diamond, looked about. He had to look twice, however, before he could be sure that that was his boy in the middle of the tumult. He rushed in, and sent the assailants flying in all directions. The girl thanked Diamond, and began sweeping as if nothing had happened, while his father led him away. With the help of old Tom, the waterman, he was soon washed into decency, and his father set him on the box again, perfectly satisfied with the account he gave of the cause of his being in a fray.



"I couldn't let them behave so to a poor girl— could I, father?" he said.

"Certainly not, Diamond," said his father, quite pleased, for Diamond's father was a gentleman.

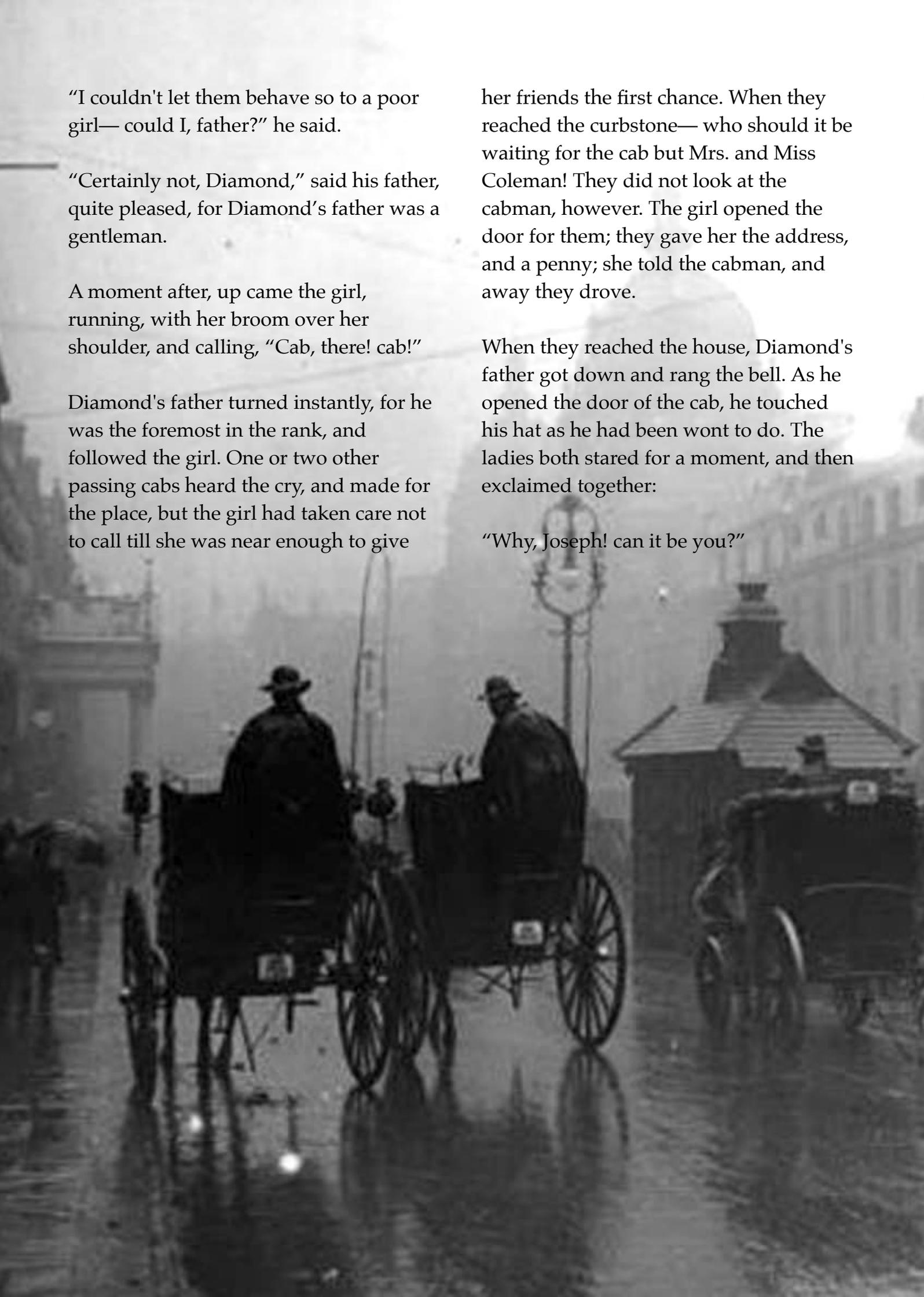
A moment after, up came the girl, running, with her broom over her shoulder, and calling, "Cab, there! cab!"

Diamond's father turned instantly, for he was the foremost in the rank, and followed the girl. One or two other passing cabs heard the cry, and made for the place, but the girl had taken care not to call till she was near enough to give

her friends the first chance. When they reached the curbstone— who should it be waiting for the cab but Mrs. and Miss Coleman! They did not look at the cabman, however. The girl opened the door for them; they gave her the address, and a penny; she told the cabman, and away they drove.

When they reached the house, Diamond's father got down and rang the bell. As he opened the door of the cab, he touched his hat as he had been wont to do. The ladies both stared for a moment, and then exclaimed together:

"Why, Joseph! can it be you?"





"Yes, ma'am; yes, miss," answered he, again touching his hat, with all the respect he could possibly put into the action. "It's a lucky day which I see you once more upon it."

"Who would have thought it?" said Mrs. Coleman. "It's changed times for both of us, Joseph, and it's not very often we can have a cab even; but you see my daughter is still very poorly, and she can't bear the motion of the omnibuses. Indeed we meant to walk a bit first before we took a cab, but just at the corner, for as hot as the sun was, a cold wind came down the street, and I saw that Miss Coleman must not face it. But to think we should have fallen upon you, of all the cabmen in London! I didn't know you had got a cab."

"Well, you see, ma'am, I had a chance of buying the old horse, and I couldn't resist him. There he is, looking at you, ma'am. Nobody knows the sense in that head of his."

The two ladies went near to pat the horse, and then they noticed Diamond on the box.

"Why, you've got both Diamonds with you," said Miss Coleman. "How do you do, Diamond?"

Diamond lifted his cap, and answered politely.

"He'll be fit to drive himself before long," said his father, proudly. "The old horse is a-teaching of him."



“Well, he must come and see us, now you've found us out. Where do you live?”

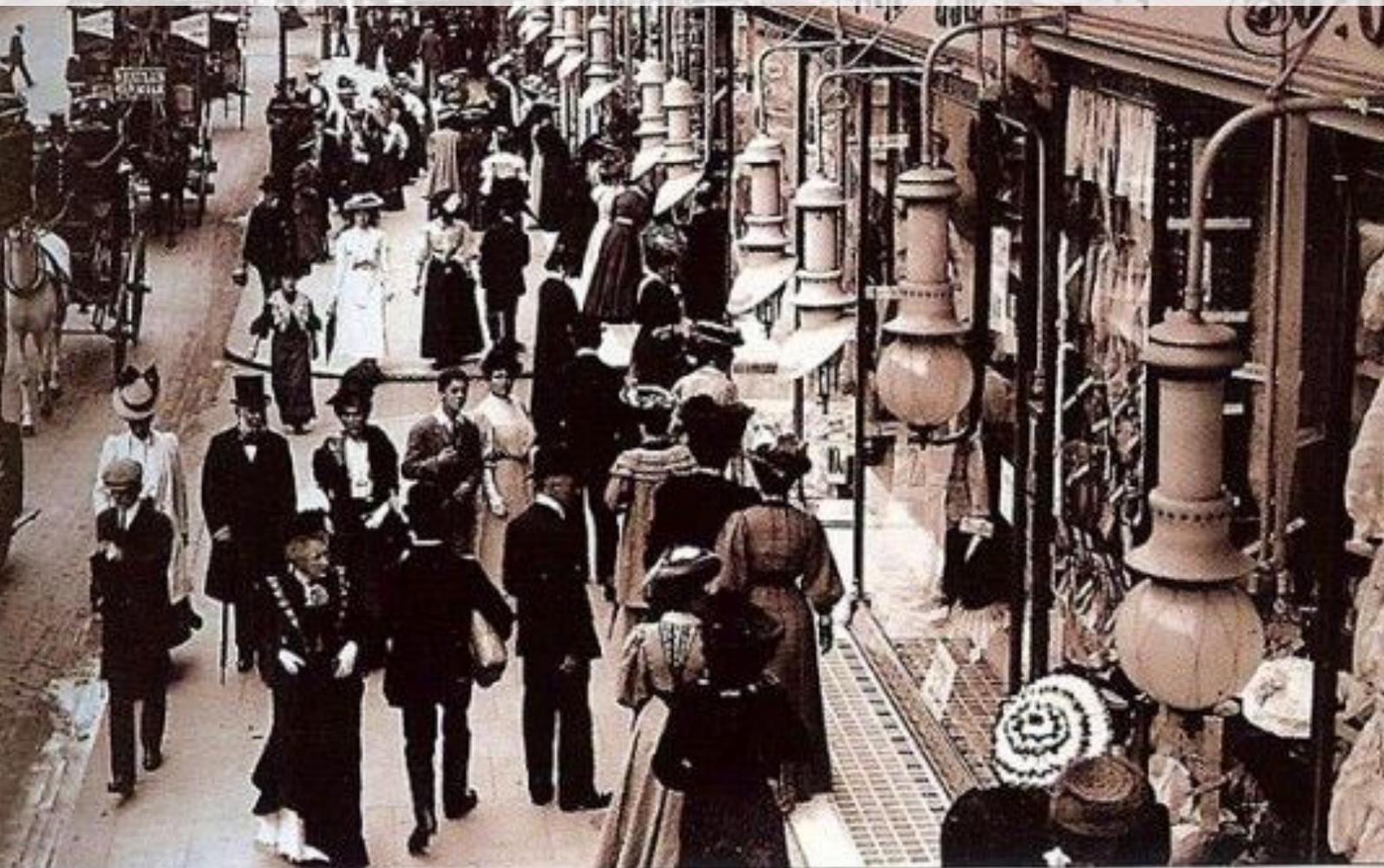
Diamond's father gave the ladies a ticket with his name and address printed on it; and then Mrs. Coleman took out her purse, saying:

“And what's your fare, Joseph?”

“No, thank you, ma'am,” said Joseph. “It was your own old horse as took you; and me you paid long ago.”

He jumped on his box before she could say another word, and with a parting salute drove off, leaving them on the pavement, with the maid holding the door for them.

It was a long time now since Diamond had seen North Wind, or even thought much about her. And as his father drove along, he was thinking not about her, but about the crossing-sweeper, and was wondering what made him feel as if he knew her quite well, when he could not remember anything of her. But a picture arose in his mind of a little girl running before the wind and dragging her broom after her; and from that, by degrees, he recalled the whole adventure of the night when he got down from North Wind's back in a London street. But he could not quite satisfy himself whether the whole affair was not a dream which he had dreamed when he was a very little boy. Only he had been to the back of the north wind since— there could be no doubt of that; for when he woke every morning, he always knew that he had been there again. And as he thought and thought, he recalled another thing that had happened that morning, which, although it seemed a mere accident, might have something to do with what had happened since. His father had intended going on the stand at King's Cross that morning, and had turned into Gray's Inn Lane to drive there, when they found the way blocked up, and upon inquiry were informed that a stack of chimneys had been blown down in the night, and had fallen across the road. They were just clearing the rubbish away. Diamond's father turned, and made for Charing Cross.



That night the father and mother had a great deal to talk about.

"Poor things!" said the mother. "it's worse for them than it is for us. You see they've been used to such grand things, and for them to come down to a little poky house like that— it breaks my heart to think of it."

"I don't know" said Diamond thoughtfully, "whether Mrs. Coleman had bells on her toes."

"What do you mean, child?" said his mother.

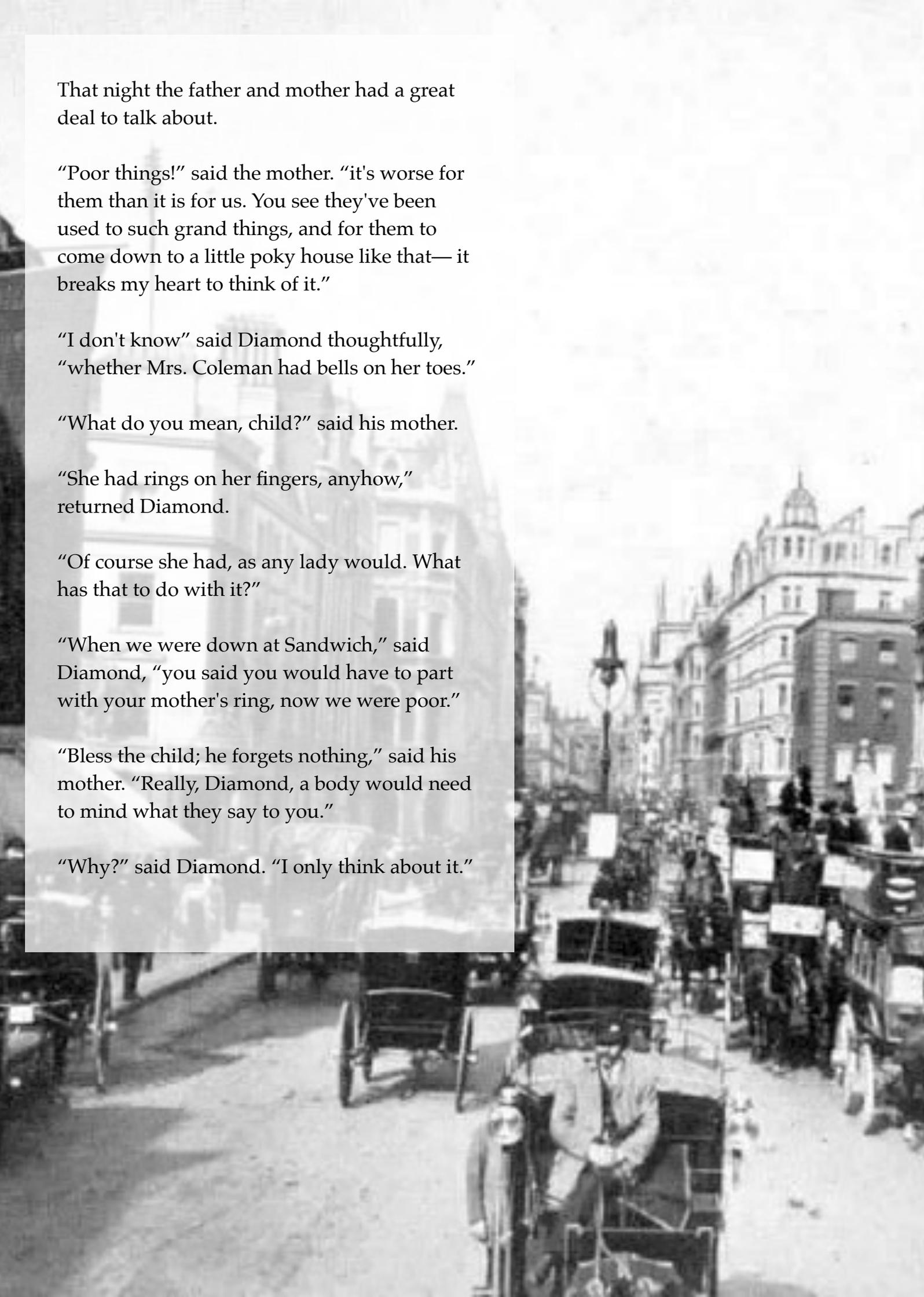
"She had rings on her fingers, anyhow," returned Diamond.

"Of course she had, as any lady would. What has that to do with it?"

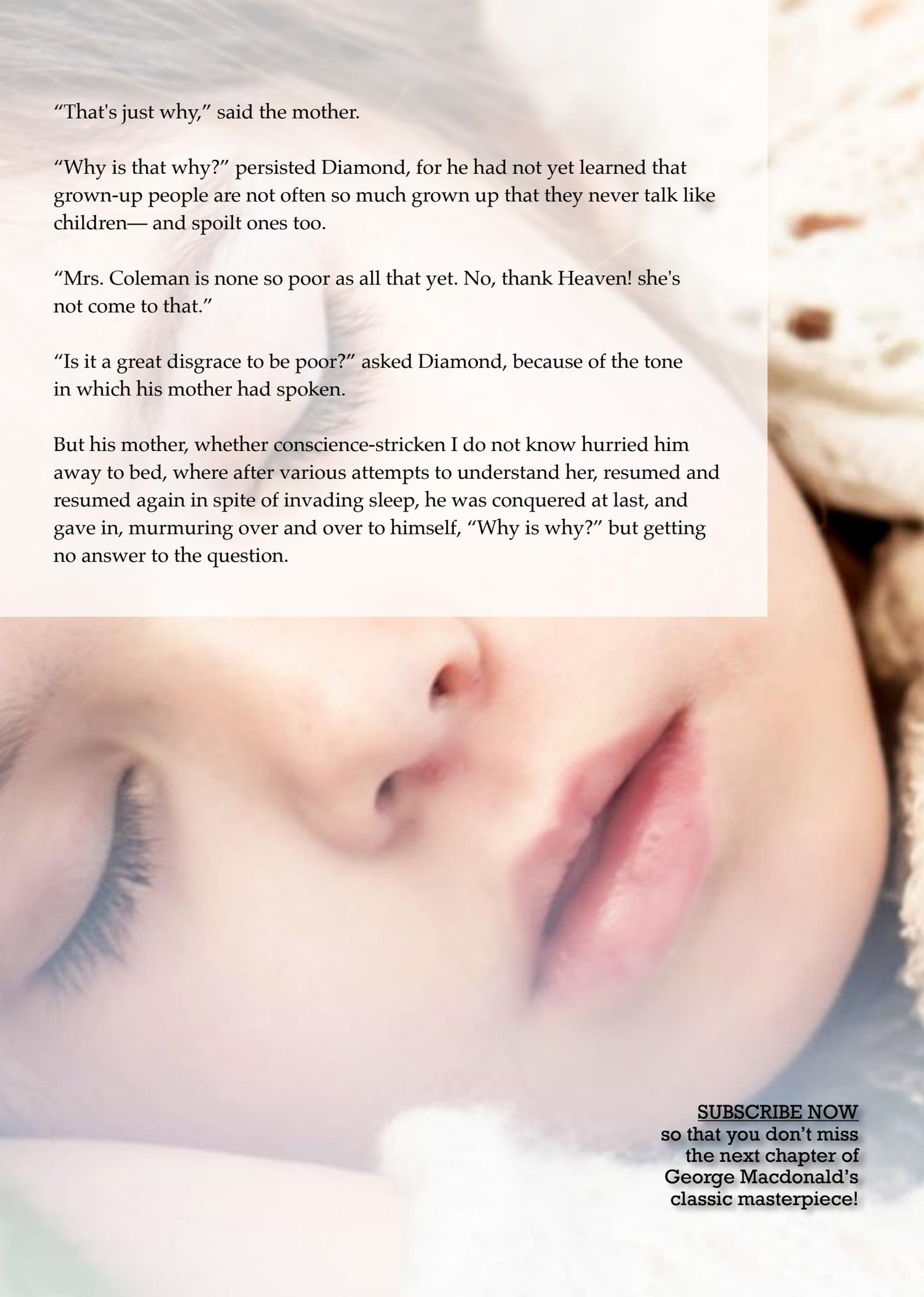
"When we were down at Sandwich," said Diamond, "you said you would have to part with your mother's ring, now we were poor."

"Bless the child; he forgets nothing," said his mother. "Really, Diamond, a body would need to mind what they say to you."

"Why?" said Diamond. "I only think about it."







“That's just why,” said the mother.

“Why is that why?” persisted Diamond, for he had not yet learned that grown-up people are not often so much grown up that they never talk like children— and spoilt ones too.

“Mrs. Coleman is none so poor as all that yet. No, thank Heaven! she's not come to that.”

“Is it a great disgrace to be poor?” asked Diamond, because of the tone in which his mother had spoken.

But his mother, whether conscience-stricken I do not know hurried him away to bed, where after various attempts to understand her, resumed and resumed again in spite of invading sleep, he was conquered at last, and gave in, murmuring over and over to himself, “Why is why?” but getting no answer to the question.

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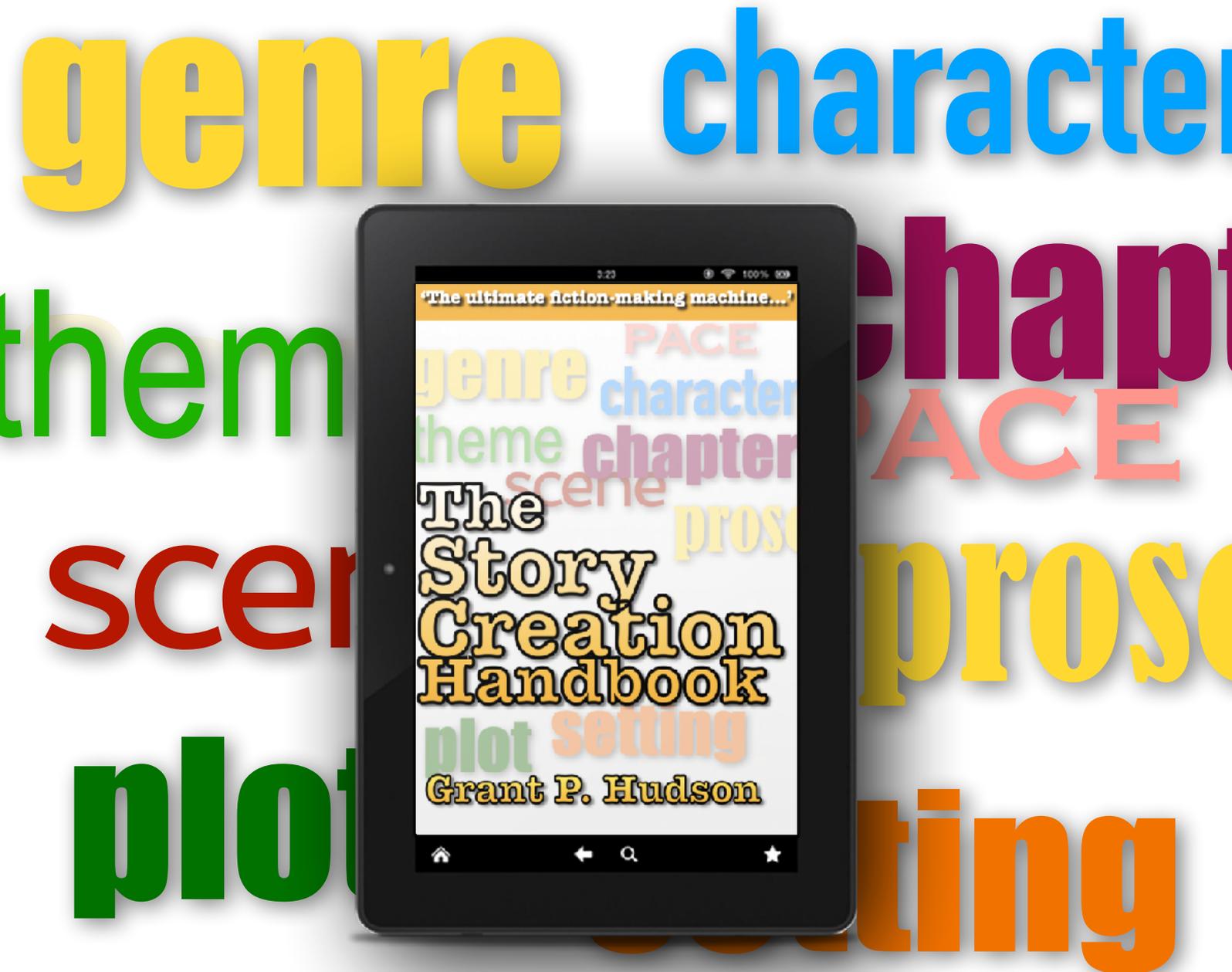
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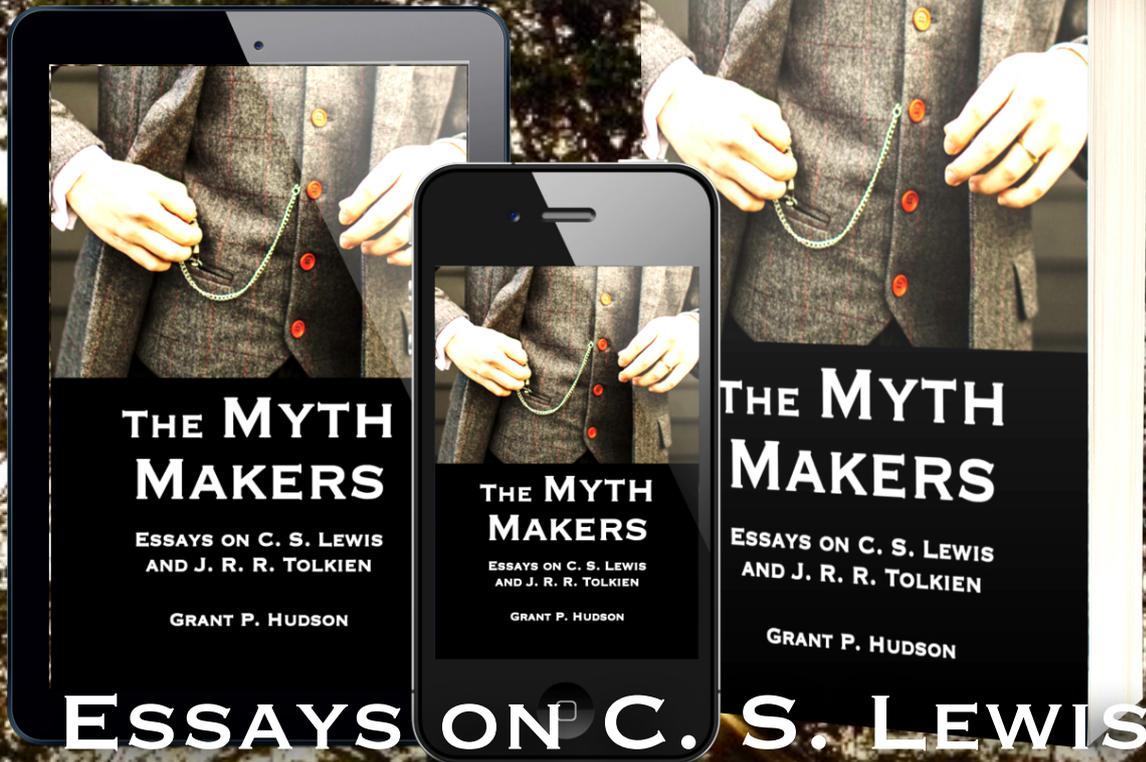
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Poetry Corner

Poetry from Paweł Markiewicz, Elizabeth Brown,
Fabrice B. Poussin and John Grey.

Paweł Markiewicz was born in 1983 in Siemiatycze in Poland. He is a poet who lives in Bielsk Podlaski and writes tender poems and haikus as well as long poems.



In the bewitched aviary.
The sonnet according to Mr. Shakespeare

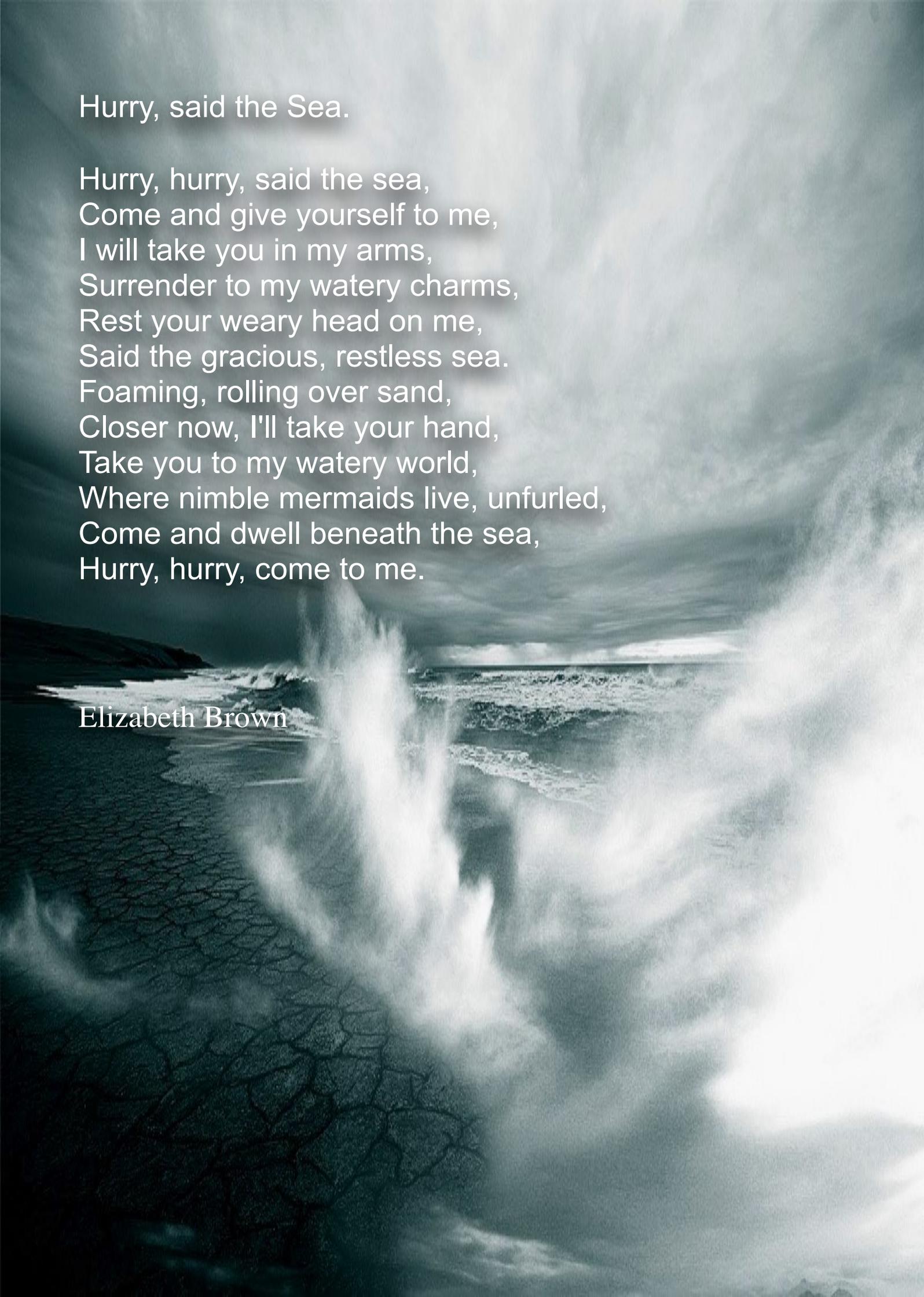
Helots muse about moony Golden Fleece of the **condor**.
Drudges think of the dreamy eternal dew of the **hen**.
Philosophers ponder on winged fantasy of the **crow**.
Kings ruminate on a picturesque gold of the **jay**.

Priests contemplate the dreamed, soft, meek weird of the **woodpecker**.
Masters daydream about nice marvelous songs of the **tern**.
Soothsayers dream of fulfilled gold of the **yellowhammer**.
Knights philosophize about poetic dawn of the **wren**.

Hoplites fantasize about a red sky of the **sparrow**.
Athletes describe the most tender treasure-charm of the **snipe**.
Gods remember an enchanted, dear temple of the **seagull**.
Goddesses recall fairytale-like heroes of the **kite**.

Poets commemorate the elves-like heaven of the **owl**.
Bards reflect on most amazing dreamery of the **rook**.

soothsayer – fortuneteller



Hurry, said the Sea.

Hurry, hurry, said the sea,
Come and give yourself to me,
I will take you in my arms,
Surrender to my watery charms,
Rest your weary head on me,
Said the gracious, restless sea.
Foaming, rolling over sand,
Closer now, I'll take your hand,
Take you to my watery world,
Where nimble mermaids live, unfurled,
Come and dwell beneath the sea,
Hurry, hurry, come to me.

Elizabeth Brown

The Beachcomber, the Optimist.

The beachcomber scours the sand,
Detector held in hand,
He stops, he stoops, he digs a bit,
Excitement growing, and,
There's nothing there –
Well, not this time.

Elizabeth Brown



Fabrice B. Poussin teaches French and English at a university in Georgia, USA. His work in poetry and photography has appeared in Kestrel, Symposium, The Chimes, and many other publications worldwide. His collections "In Absentia," and "If I Had a Gun," were published by Silver Bow in 2021 and 2022.

Beyond the Pearly Smile

You glide above a manufactured surface
at the foot of a century's history
carefree as you plan your next move.

Distant behind the cool gaze of your years
it seems you measure the joy you share
careful of almost all as if strangers.

The lens focuses somewhere beyond this truth
within a warmth only it can capture
for the moment of a snapshot in a flash.

He cherishes these gentle smiles in winter
upon a hill for a time of purposeful leisure
an illusion vanishes as if it never was.

The smiles come naturally
as she takes another pose in dim sunlight
if only this brief encounter concluded in a mere
touch.

Fabrice B. Poussin

Oozing fantasy

He had never seen a corpse
standing in the hallways of his city
smiling with the arrogance of the living
oozing with the blackness of evil.

It was a new sight to picture her
sitting in the executive thrown
melted into the fabric of black chemistry
a large grin on the skull she called a visage.

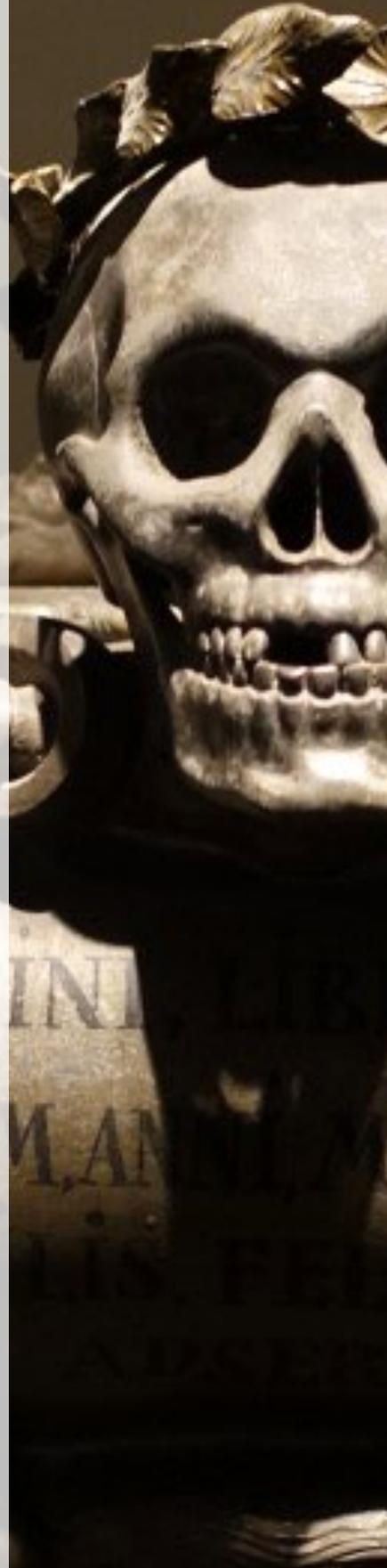
Armies of vipers slithered through the pores
of a breast marked by too many tales
groaning with screams of ironic agony
under what was once a golden fleece.

Teeth showed through the dried flesh
while a throat spoke with greasy vowels
in the midst of an unstoppable decay
attempting to be noble within a forest of lies.

It was long ago when she was yet like him
solid in her pearly dress heaving with kind life
in a light silk-dress she seemed to glide
glowing with the magic infinity.

Gone these days now smell of putrefaction
in the square box she may call her empire
no one dare step again for fear of contagion
as she keeps on laughing on the pain of the dying.

Fabrice B. Poussin





John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *Sheepshead Review*, *Stand*, *Washington Square Review* and *Floyd County Moonshine*. Latest books, “Covert” “Memory Outside The Head” and “Guest Of Myself” are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in the *McNeese Review*, *Rathalla Review* and *Open Ceilings*.

THE TRAIL OF HUMAN CRUMBS

There's some of me in various parts of the world.
It's not as if I'm absent-minded
and leave coats and socks in hotels.
But I brush against monuments
and something scrapes off.
Or I shake hands with a stranger,
and my stain is passed on.

There's even a word or two I said
that stuck around after I made my exit.
Or even something as simple as a look
that found its way out of my head
and into the eyes of others.

That's how it is with people
when we move around.
We figure we're taking our shadow with us.
But we don't get all of it.
Some stays behind,
fits in neatly with the shadows locals cast.

That's why I'm in Paris,
as a sip of espresso in a sidewalk café.
Or in Morocco, still handling the merchandise.
Or in Australia.
Hell, I'm so much in Australia
it's a wonder any of me is here.

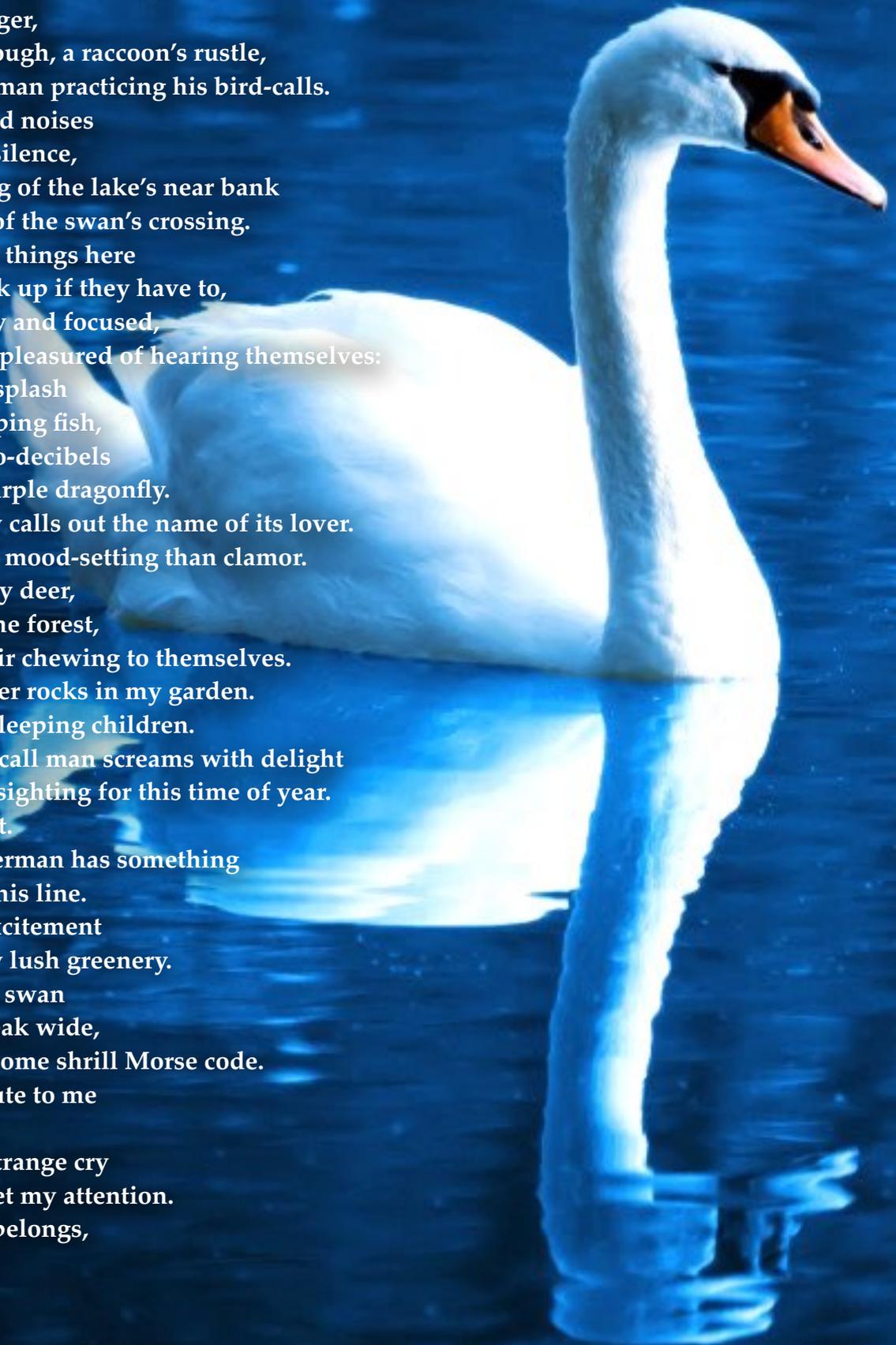
I don't go looking for these remnants.
Even if I retraced my steps,
so many others have stepped in them since then.
I just accept the fact that I can be everywhere at once.
In Rio. In Los Angeles. Even in Madrid.
I strive to be individual.
But I accept that I'm collective.

John Grey

THE SOUNDS THAT BELONG

Sound grows out of all this walking:
deft whistle
of a tanager,
a fisherman's cough, a raccoon's rustle,
a tanned, wiry man practicing his bird-calls.
Sparse, scattered noises
are still silence,
as is the lapping of the lake's near bank
and the ripple of the swan's crossing.
Any number of things here
can speak up if they have to,
but deliberately and focused,
not just for the pleased of hearing themselves:
the tiny splash
of a jumping fish,
the micro-decibels
of the purple dragonfly.
A song sparrow calls out the name of its lover.
It's more mood-setting than clamor.
Even the hungry deer,
at the edge of the forest,
keep their chewing to themselves.
I've heard louder rocks in my garden.
More raucous sleeping children.
The birdcall man screams with delight
at a rare sighting for this time of year.
I allow him that.
The fisherman has something
tugging his line.
But all of his excitement
is cushioned by lush greenery.
Even the swan
opens beak wide,
lets out some shrill Morse code.
But that's as mute to me
as the sun.
Sure, a strange cry
would get my attention.
But if a sound belongs,
what's to hear?

John Grey



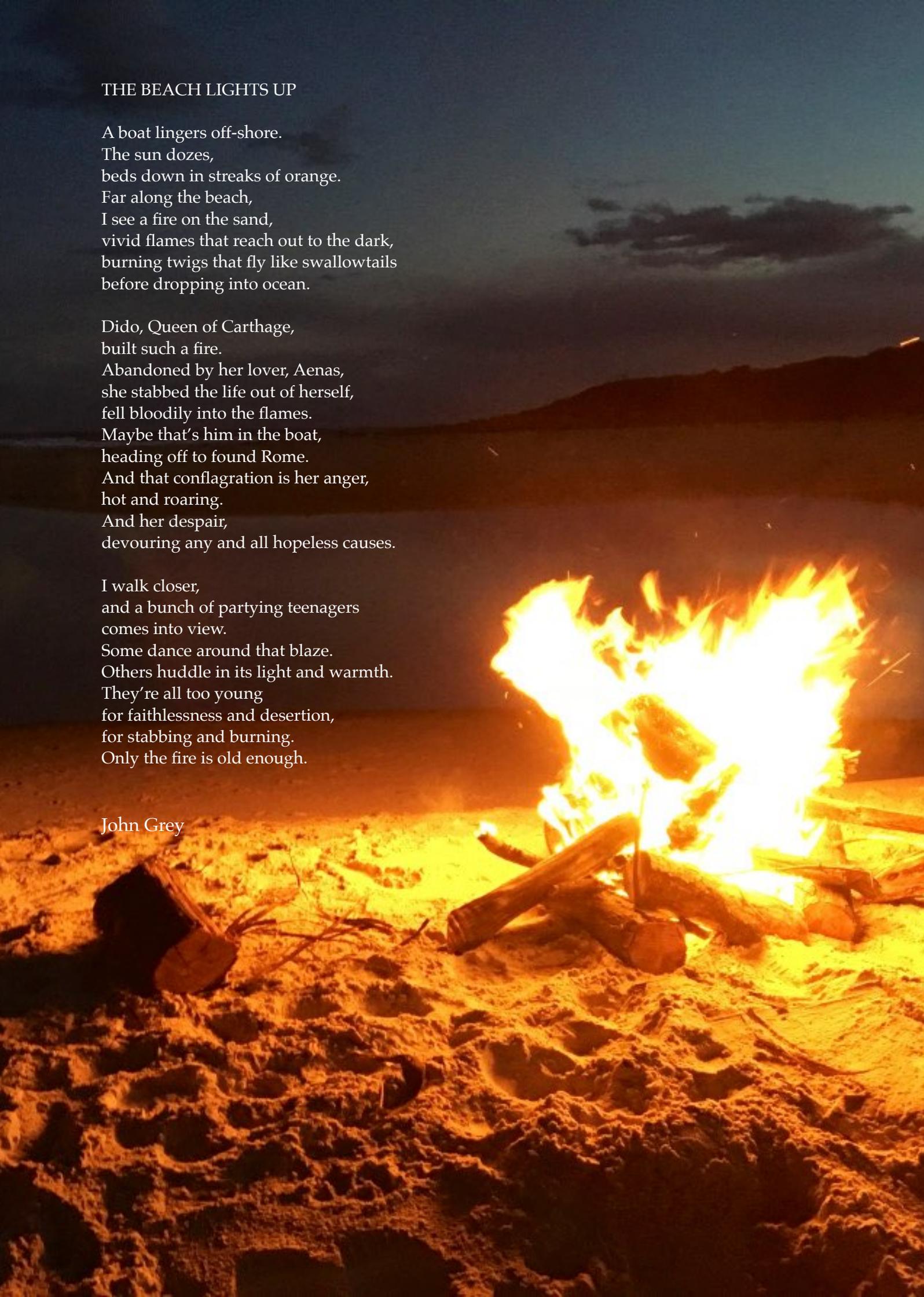
THE BEACH LIGHTS UP

A boat lingers off-shore.
The sun dozes,
beds down in streaks of orange.
Far along the beach,
I see a fire on the sand,
vivid flames that reach out to the dark,
burning twigs that fly like swallowtails
before dropping into ocean.

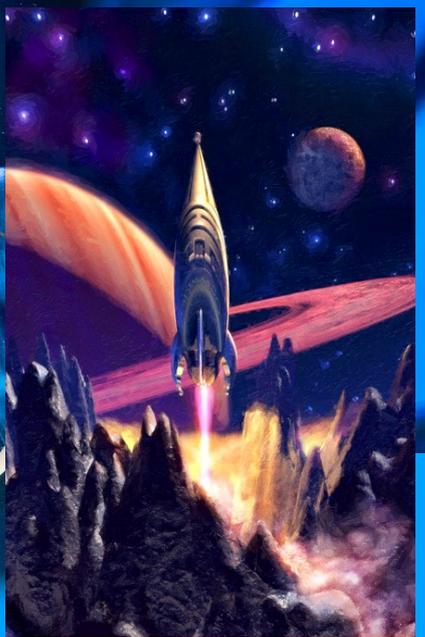
Dido, Queen of Carthage,
built such a fire.
Abandoned by her lover, Aenas,
she stabbed the life out of herself,
fell bloodily into the flames.
Maybe that's him in the boat,
heading off to found Rome.
And that conflagration is her anger,
hot and roaring.
And her despair,
devouring any and all hopeless causes.

I walk closer,
and a bunch of partying teenagers
comes into view.
Some dance around that blaze.
Others huddle in its light and warmth.
They're all too young
for faithlessness and desertion,
for stabbing and burning.
Only the fire is old enough.

John Grey



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Phantom Verisimilitude

From the darkness come two poles, light and dark; between those poles archetypes form, moving into orbit around one pole or the other. In the gaps between, strange images (birds whose eggshells form the world, dew droplets combining to make reality, and so on) and non-sequiturs (from an ice-giant's armpit comes the first man and woman, for example) roam unbridled. This is the zone of the Myth.

As the light grows stronger, so the images become clarified: in the zone of Romance or Legend, superhuman figures come into conflict, quests and tasks are set, there are clear beginnings and endings. But the archetypes are the same. And, as Romance turns into the High Mimetic, the zone where human figures become more vulnerable and the world grows more solid, and grisly deeds and death contrast with wisdom and sanity in ways which we can almost share, we can see the same archetypes. The narrative is further defined, paralleling history itself, as in Shakespeare's great Tragedies and Histories — but the bones of Myth show through.



Similarly, as children we participate in a world without an awareness of law or sequences or even cause and effect — it is we who emerge from the darkness into a reality in which everything is non-sequitur at first. Gradually, things begin to make sense: time and order, colour and

motion take the place of primal polarities. The towering, partly-archetypal figures of our parents and guardians slowly dwindle into vulnerable human figures. We learn to split apart our souls into thinking compartments, some for rationalities, others for imaginings; whereas at first the

universe is awash with emotion, we are taught by the culture around us that as time goes on those feelings belong largely inside ourselves. We cease to participate in the world in the same way. But the bones of participation show through.



We cease to participate in the world in the same way. But the bones of participation show through.

Myths mutate into Legends, which transform into embellished stories of real kings and leaders; our awareness mutates into early childhood and then into the garnished but harder world of later childhood.

Then comes the zone of what Frye called the Low Mimetic, in which life is presented as more prosaic. The

lumbering god-like beings of Myth have diminished through the superhuman heroes of Legend and the grand leaders of Tragedy and History and become characters whom we might just meet in the street — except that they aren't, quite. The fiction of the Low Mimetic contains stories which do not stretch the bounds of credibility quite as far as

Shakespeare's plays or the legends of yesteryear, but they are not yet documentary accounts: events are still designed; incidents and outcomes purposeful and controlled. An author is still present; characters are not 'real', they are crafted; a plotline exists, even when it is deftly disguised as a series of random occurrences.



Comparably, as childhood wanes into adolescence, we are still part of a world haunted by order, by a sense that some kind of unity must be around the corner, or a feeling of betrayal and injustice when we find it missing. Adulthood beckons to us with the same sense of 'conclusion' as the final part of a novel. The sense of Myth lingers.

As childhood wanes into adolescence, we are still part of a world haunted by order, by a sense that some kind of unity must be around the corner...





What we find in the **Low Mimetic** are the same polarities, the same archetypes, the same motion towards light or dark, but this time dressed in 'ordinariness'.

It's tempting to equate the Low Mimetic, that mode of fiction that is supposed to be about 'ordinary people' and which developed with the novel with a sense of verisimilitude.

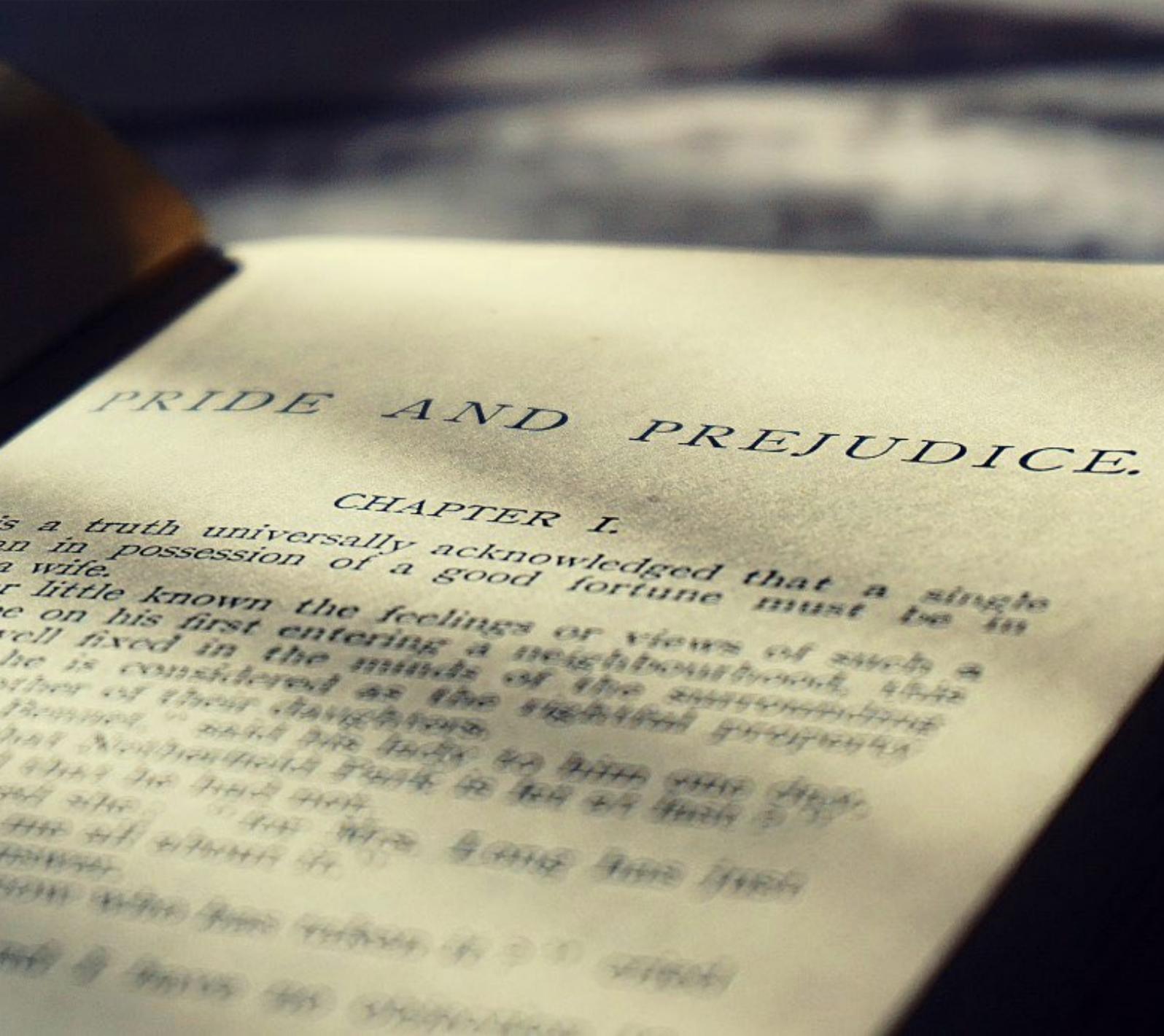
'Verisimilitude' means 'like truth' and so we think that the 19th century novel and many of its successors are representations of 'the world

as we know it'. In these kinds of stories, people meet occurrences which, we imagine, might happen to us as we sit reading the book: accidents, marriages, love affairs, deaths, divorces, and an almost infinite amount of what we might be tempted to term 'real life events'. But verisimilitude is 'like truth' — it isn't actual truth. It

disguises itself in different clothes from its predecessors in the High Mimetic or the Romance or the Myth behind them, but they are clothes nevertheless. What we find in the Low Mimetic are the same polarities, the same archetypes, the same motion towards light or dark, but this time dressed in 'ordinariness'.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* for example, would be classed as a Low Mimetic piece of fiction. In our next chapter, we will see just how much its weight is carried by the skeleton of Myth beneath its surface.

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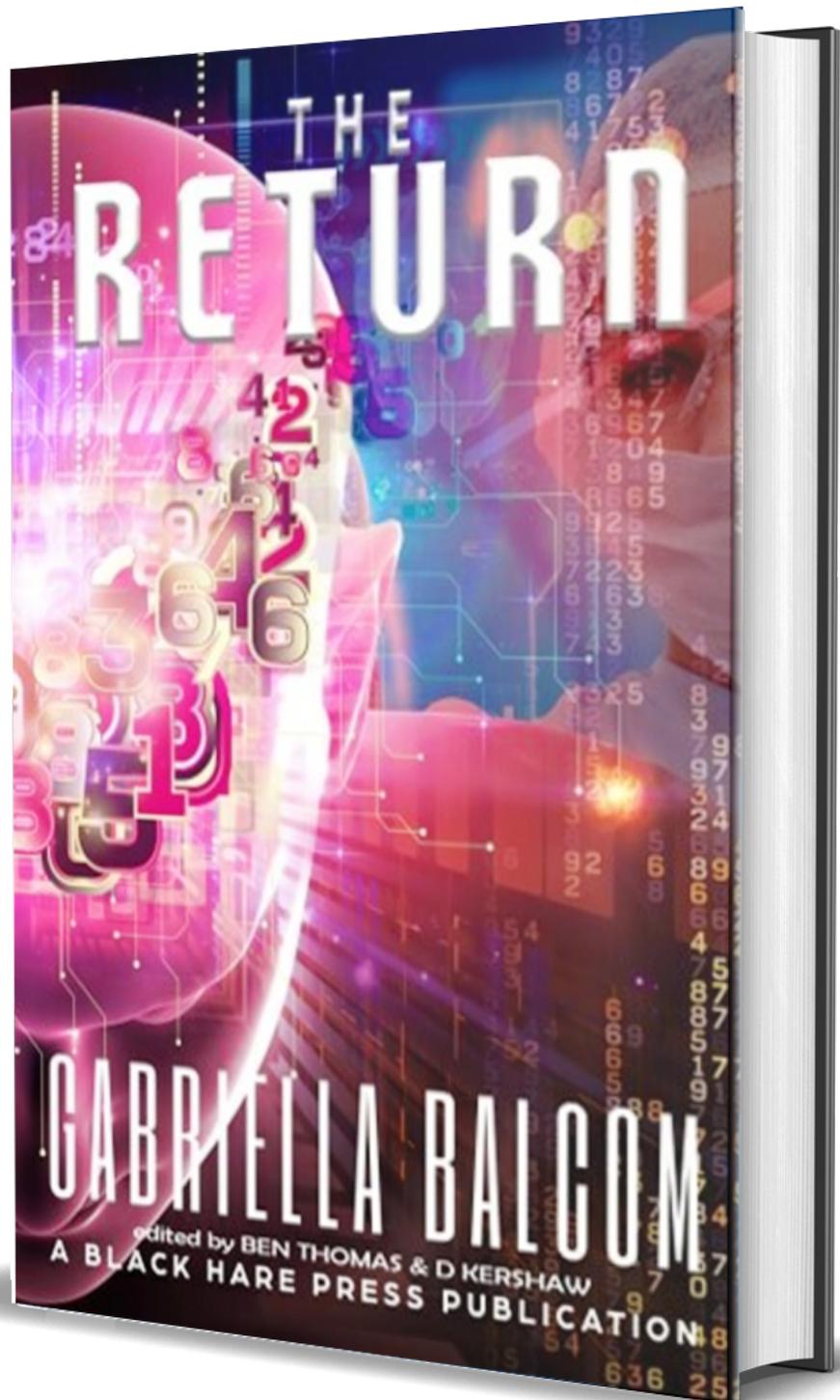
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Gabriella Balcom writes fantasy, horror, romance, sci-fi, literary fiction, and more, and was nominated for the 2020 Washington Science Fiction Association's Small Press Award. She won second place in JayZoMon/Dark Myth Company's Open Contract Challenge, 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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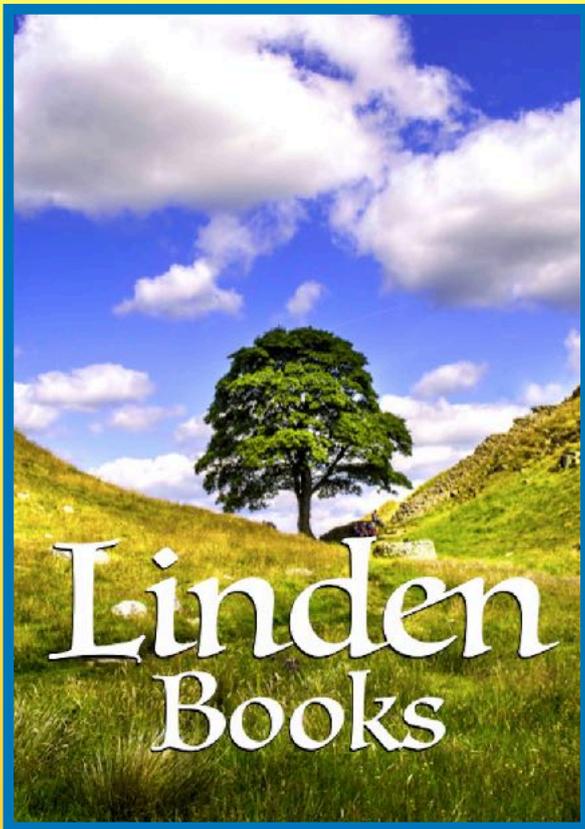


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Chapter Sixteen: The Physics of Finance

It's probably not a dangerous assumption to conclude that the majority of business are opened in order to make money for their owners and managers. Making money, it is safely said, is what business is all about.

As we have begun to see, there is both more to it and less to it than that.

A great deal of confusion and misinformation exists in

the world about money. It is crucial for the long-term success of your business that the place of money, what it is and how it works, is understood clearly.

Let's revise what a business should actually be all about.

A successful business concentrates on removing obstacles between the customer and the products or services the customer wants or needs.

To achieve real, lasting expansion and satisfaction, to survive as a well-rounded, productive, secure survivor which will generate income and security for a long time to come it should be concerned with one thing and one thing only:

The end product of any business is to bring together the customer and the product or service that the customer needs or wants in an exact match.

This principle, if applied, will guarantee lasting success *and lots of money* for you.

Another physics analogy is useful here.

In physics, it's understood that electricity and magnetism are manifestations of a single underlying electromagnetic force. This idea can be applied to business.

Electromagnetism is a branch of physical science that describes the interactions of electricity and magnetism, both as separate

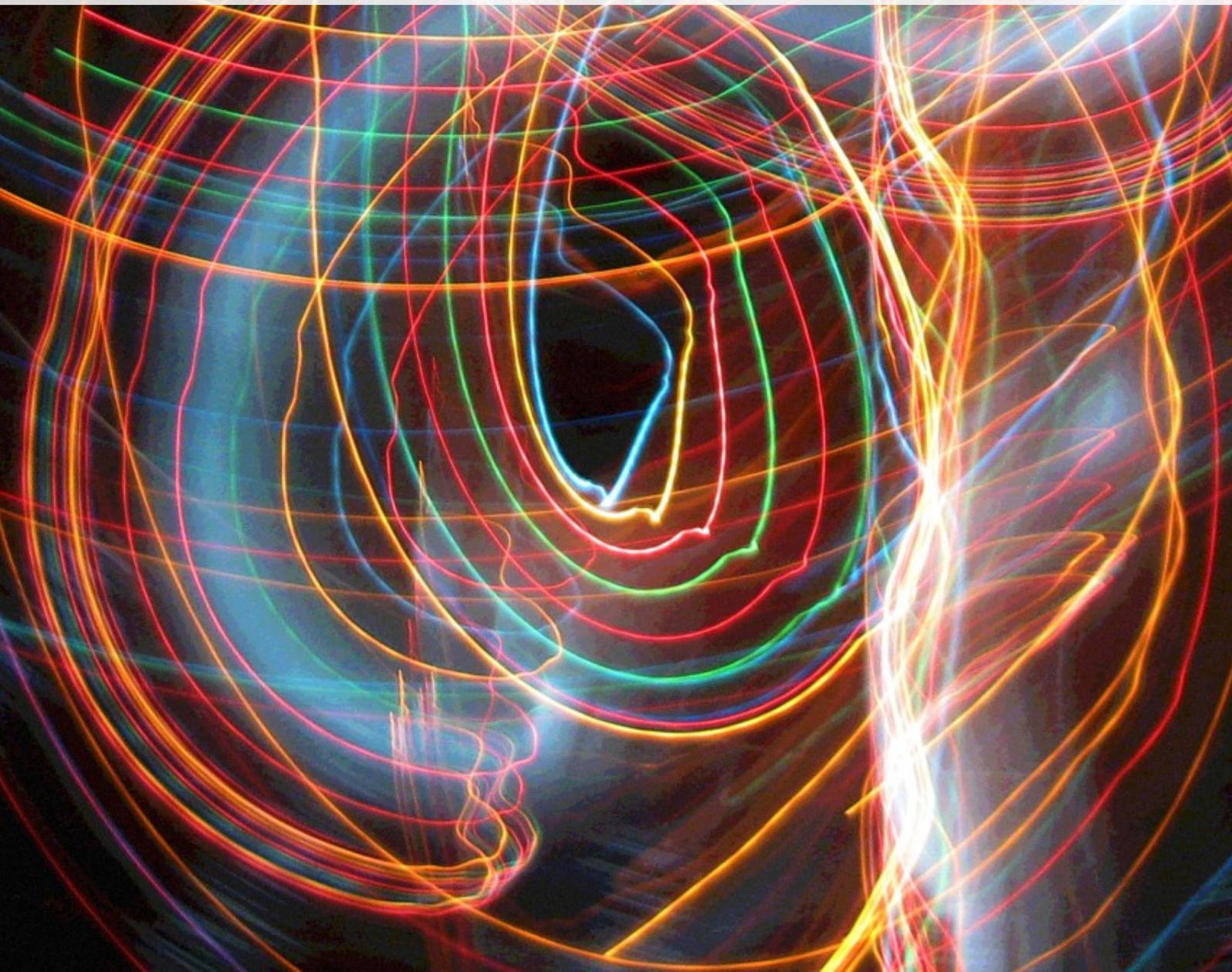
phenomena and as a singular electromagnetic force. The rules of electromagnetism explain geomagnetic and electromagnetic phenomena by explaining how atoms interact. Wider aspects of life and business, including how customers interact with products or services, can be explained in the same way.

You may remember from school that, in electromagnetism, the negative particle, the electron, is generally in orbit around the atom, while the positive or neutral particles reside inside the atomic nucleus.

When the electrons of an element are not tightly bound to the atom's nucleus, they can move from atom to atom and a substance called a conductor can conduct electricity.

Let's picture this in business terms:

In business, when a prospect's attention is not bound but is able to flow from one thing to the next, the prospect's attention can be directed towards a product or service. In other words, prospect attention moves easily and can be under your control.



For a business to work as a customer-attracting machine, there has to be a balance of vacuums in tune with each other, drawing the customer's attention along like an electron until it reaches your product.

So far, so good, I hope.

That flow creates more and more attraction just as flowing electricity creates magnetism.

As customers flow towards products or services, that flow creates increasing attraction.



*As customers
flow towards
products or
services, that
flow creates
increasing
attraction.*

How do we create a chain of increasing vacuums which draws prospect attention along towards a product? Let's have a closer look at the Business Cycle.

The Business Cycle consists of the following steps:

- *An initial vacuum* - this is the vacuum you don't see, the need which attracts a potential customer into the vicinity of your business whether that means browsing through a shop, or a website, or a phone directory, as discussed in a previous chapter.

- *The prospect arrives* - either by walking up to you or an attendant in a shop, or contacting you through a website or a phone.

- *Building a vacuum* - this is where your business uses the techniques used by all successful sales or marketing, knowingly or not, to magnify a prospect's existing vacuums attract and direct his or her attention towards a product or service. This includes introducing the product or service at the right time and fine tuning it to match the prospect's precise needs.

- *The customer purchases the product or service* - this occurs at the exact point when the vacuum exerts the necessary degree of motion for the prospect to hand over money and become a customer.

- *Fulfilment* - the customer and the product are brought together.

The more powerful or larger the vacuum, the quicker the point of purchase - given that money is available to the customer.

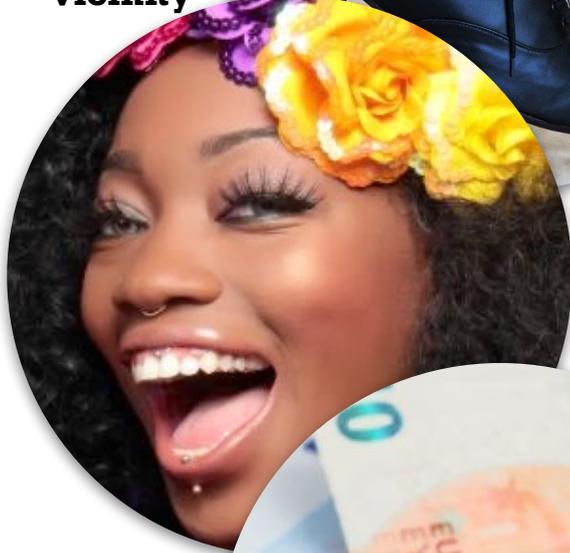
If more money is available, the purchasing point can occur more quickly.



Initial vacuum: person has a need = prospect



Prospect arrives in your vicinity



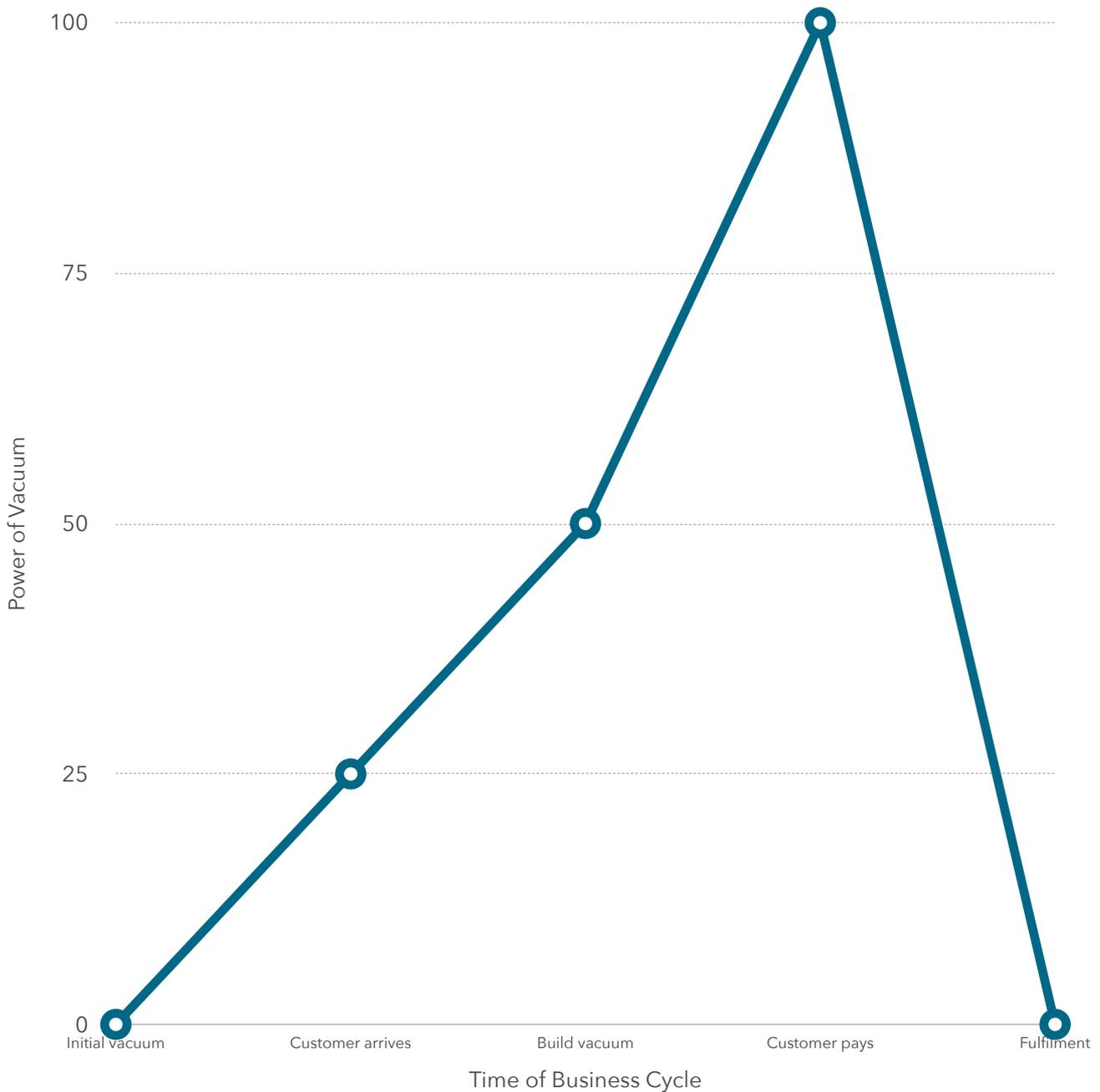
Prospect's needs are magnified through marketing



Prospect becomes customer



Customer and product are brought together



Conversely, the less money that is available, the more powerful the vacuum needs to be. A person with very little money has to be compelled by a correspondingly powerful vacuum to part with it.

When the customer receives the product or service which meets his or her exact needs, the vacuum power drops to zero. This is when

vacuums are filled; it is a point with its own phenomena, as we shall see later.

Prospects tend to hold onto money, and tend to hold onto it more the more needs they have. They look for the products and services that match their needs and desires. They hold onto money in their pockets and purses until

they feel confident enough that their vacuums can be filled by actual products and services.

Prospects judge carefully, usually, whether or not the promise of a vacuum filled is worth the vacuum power that they have in hand. This is what determines *price*.

Price is also determined by the social perception of available wealth.

On a larger scale, privatisation is an effort to boost vacuum-power (and thus generate wealth); nationalisation or a socialist programme is an attempt to reduce vacuum-power (and thus reduce inequalities).

On a personal scale, an expansion of choices increases the pull on an individual's finances as each business vies for attention; a reduction of choices decreases the pull.

That also tells us something more about businesses:

Businesses are vacuum finding and vacuum filling machines.

In fact, economies, societies and nations run on these principles, not just businesses. Customers, communities, companies, countries: all have a certain *vacuum power*.

Vacuums fall into four broad categories:

1. Basic vacuums - shelter, food, security, health
2. Enhanced vacuums - education, entertainment, companionship
3. Additional vacuums - luxuries, accessories, comforts
4. Destructive vacuums - addictions, harmful items



**Basic
vacuums
- shelter,
food,
security,
health**

**Enhanced
vacuums -
education,
entertainment,
companionship**



**Additional
vacuums -
luxuries,
accessories,
comforts**

**Destructive
vacuums -
addictions,
harmful
items**



In certain parts of the world, fundamental survival is a daily battle. As basic survival is covered, enhanced vacuums become central. In richer countries, for example, it is taken for granted that education, entertainment and companionship will be commonplace and part of the fabric of society — these are often missing in poorer nations where the population is scrambling simply to keep itself fed.

As lower vacuums are filled, the wealthier countries provide luxuries as a matter of course.

The key issue for you and your business is what

happens with your individual prospects and what makes them pay money for your products or services.

What tips the balance so that a prospect reaches into a purse or pocket and pulls out the cash or credit card which will be passed over to you?

Right now, a prospect with money in his or her hands considers that their needs can potentially be filled. What triggers the point of exchange so that a customer will swap cash for a real vacuum-filler?

A prospect will swap money for a real vacuum-filler (product or service) when they perceive that a vacuum urgently needs

filling and that your product or service has some chance of accomplishing that.

To reach that point a) a vacuum must be created, discovered and/or activated and b) a product or service must be perceived to align with the vacuum.

Bombarding a person with product features in the hope of registering alignment with their vacuums is enormously wasteful and can be counterproductive.

Individual, group and social prosperity depends upon vacuum-power.



Individual, group and social prosperity depends upon vacuum-power.

Everyone can fill some kind of vacuum for another.

Those who fill the largest perceived vacuums make the most money (pro footballers, top entertainers, CEOs, bankers) and this becomes criminal (arms dealers, drug dealers etc) when destructive vacuums are involved.

Some seek to remedy inequality through *reducing* vacuum-power, but this tends to slow a society's motion and kills off motivation.

A society tends to oscillate between high vacuum-power which creates vast wealth but inequality, and government 'annexation' which reduces vacuum-power and thus reduces overall motivation and thus wealth.

So high vacuum-power leads to vast wealth and opportunity but inequality; low vacuum-power leads to low overall wealth, little opportunity but more equality.

These are big ideas and big assertions. What do they have to do with your business and your money?

Let's say you're an author, writing a novel. How can you use vacuum power to sell it to readers?

The same Business Cycle applies:

- find or create an initial vacuum
- make sure your product is placed where it can be found

- magnify your prospective reader's needs using all the tools at your disposal — websites, covers, blurbs, reviews etc.

- make it easy to make a purchase

* ensure your story fulfills the needs of your readers.

Though we have been talking about nations, the general principle applies across the boards, including within a business. If you introduce a 'high vacuum power' business culture, don't expect that everyone will respond equally and prepare for the consequences as outlined in this simple table:

| Level of Vacuum Power | Amount of Wealth | Amount of Opportunity | Wealth Distribution |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| HIGH | HIGH | HIGH | UNEVEN |
| LOW | LOW | LOW | EVEN |
| | | | |

One of the basic assumptions in our society and one of the basic assumptions in business (a *Dangerous Assumption*, about which you'll learn more later) is that the purpose of business and the purpose of Life for many people is to acquire and accumulate money.

Neither Life nor business should not just be a question of acquiring and accumulating money. Money sitting in an account does nothing except accumulate interest. Even then, accumulated interest does nothing on its own.

Money has to be *spent* as well as acquired.

Most people regard money as a thing. But any examination of any currency in the world will show that it is based on intangibles. It used to say on an English pound note 'I promise to pay the bearer upon demand the sum of one pound' followed by the signature of the secretary of the Bank of England — but that disappeared long ago along with the expectation that, if you turned up at the doors of the bank, you would be handed one pound in gold

for your pound note. And it's a good thing too, because there is no gold in there anymore.

There's a *lot* of confusion about money. That's because it isn't a 'thing' at all.

The coin in your pocket has a certain 'face value' — if you melted it down, you would get a certain amount of metal from it, which would have a certain worth. But it is what it *represents* that matters. The more you have of it, the larger the ability to fill vacuums you possess.



*It is what
money
represents that
matters*



People who don't understand money want to acquire lots of it and desperately hold onto it. This has advantages. It seems as though they are wealthy, that they can survive better. But a pile of metal coins or bunches of paper sitting in a bank drawer do not help anyone to survive better in themselves — they gain power from their ability to fill vacuums. They need to be spent in order to have worth. They need to be exchanged for food, shelter, care, material items, comforts, entertainments, property, items, work and so on, to possess any real value. Their potential to do so gives them their power.

Money is a vacuum-filler which produces the capacity to exchange vacuums (needs) for the things needed.

With money acquired, one can spend it to get the things, material and immaterial, that one feels one needs.

We spend money to assuage our hunger, to buy shelter for our bodies, entertainment for our minds, succour, perhaps, for our spirit. It's true that we need it: but getting it is only half the equation. We have to exhaust or use up the vacuum power in exchange for the real things we actually need.

That vacuum-filling power creates the confidence that enables a house to be purchased. It's the innate potential of all that vacuum-filler sitting in the bank to exert its force and be exchanged for real things that gives the mortgage lender the

confidence to lend the mortgage. And it's all carefully sewn up contractually so that, if there is any default in paying the mortgage, the actual real, physical property comes back to the lender who can, if he wishes, convert it back to money.

If one fails to see that money is a vacuum-filler, if one regards money as a thing simply to be acquired, then of course one sets out simply to acquire it and sit on it. And if it is never spent or used to acquire other things — if it is, in other words, held completely still and out of 'circulation'-- then it slowly grows and grows, increasing in power.





It's an illusion, but one that we all agree to be deceived by: 'interest rates' creep higher if there are perceived to be tornado-like vacuums in the society's circulatory system which need to be slowed down before they damage too much; interest rates sink low when there is a perception that the society has slowed down too much and needs more vacuum power.

Economists, half-grasping this idea, even came up with a whole economic philosophy somewhat based on this notion, called 'monetarism'. Monetarism says that

excessive expansion of the money supply devalues the money itself by creating inflation, and that monetary authorities should focus solely on maintaining steady prices.

This becomes clearer if we substitute the word 'vacuum-filler' for the word 'money':

Monetarism says that excessive expansion of the vacuum-filler supply devalues the vacuum-filler itself, reducing its perceived capacity to fill vacuums.

It's as though a mathematician could create

more things by inventing more numbers.

Prices — which, as we have seen, are determined by promise of the size and amount of vacuum power — creep upwards when there is too much vacuum power/need; prices go down when there is too little vacuum power/need.

Economists talk about abundance and demand, but usually don't look at the vacuums, the underlying needs which drive everything.

When more money is pumped into an economy — as with the practice of ‘quantitative easing’ by governments and financial institutions — what is actually happening is that the economy is being filled with more vacuum-filling power with addressing the lack of actual vacuum-fillers. The problem is that, if the production of actual things — goods and services — fails to match this increased vacuum-filling power, there will be a breakdown.

A society gets a craving for real products and services in the same way that a person’s health would suffer if he or she lived on some kind of

bland food substitute instead of real food for a time.

What is wanted is more products and services that match customer needs. Then a society’s real needs get satisfied. That means more money changes hands and improves the society’s ‘circulation’.

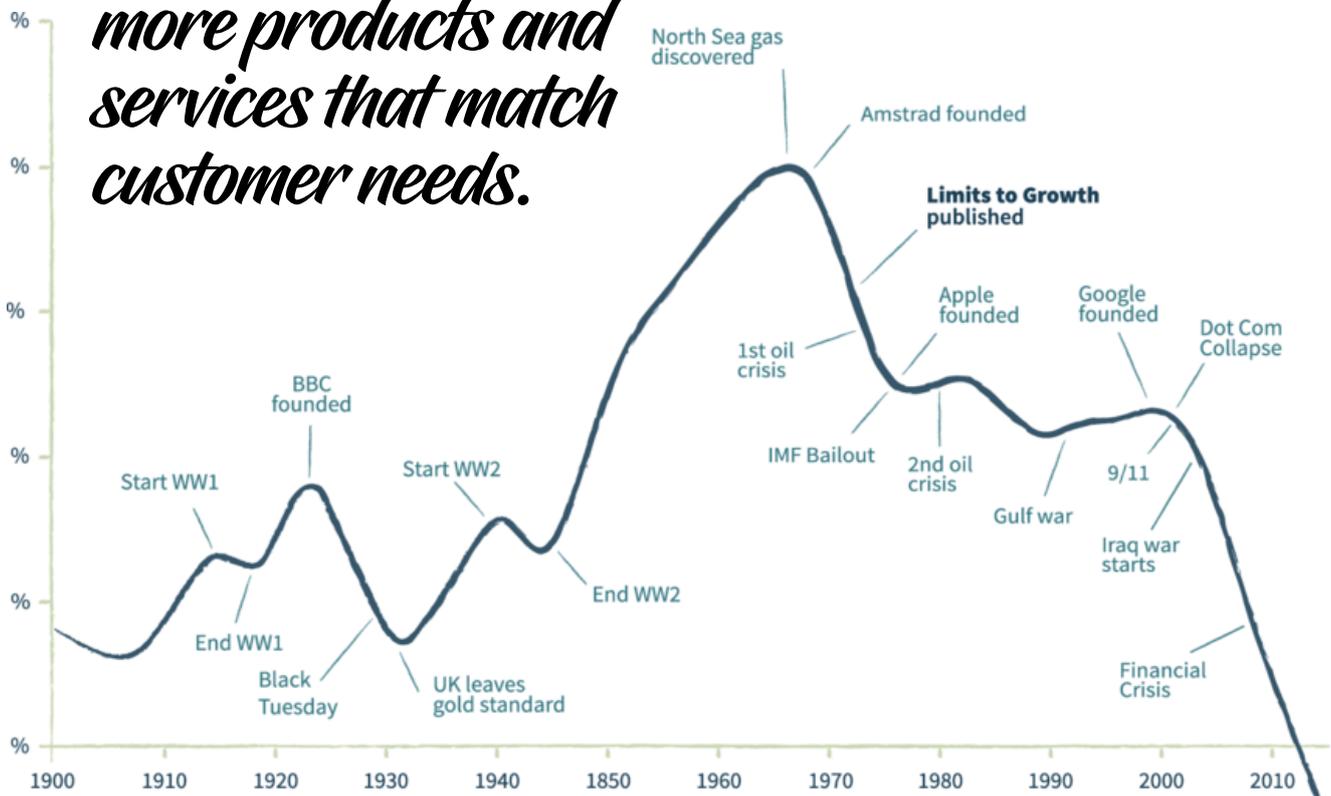
This radical rethink leads to some important ramifications for your business.

If you think of money as a thing, as we have seen, a purely financial goal makes sense — profit becomes the gold at the end of the rainbow, the dream realised, the Holy

Grail. But if you more correctly see that money is a vacuum-filler which needs to be exhausted or ‘spent’ in a constant motion, then suddenly economics makes sense on the level of your own household, your own business and indeed on every level.

If we equate the exchange of money between a customer and a business to the flow of blood, then accumulated profit sitting in a bank becomes a heart attack waiting to happen. Like blood, money must move to be healthy for the people acquiring it. They must exchange it for real things that they need or want.

What is wanted is more products and services that match customer needs.



Uk Production of Actual Things over the Last Century

If instead it is simply amassed, then the resultant inequalities — social classes of 'haves' and 'have nots' that we take for granted — take shape and become solid until they are eventually broken down in violent social revolutions. To get more and more money, people resort to lies, trickery, deception. The more money is valued as a *thing*, the more injustice arises as a consequence. Injustice magnifying eventually results in social unrest and

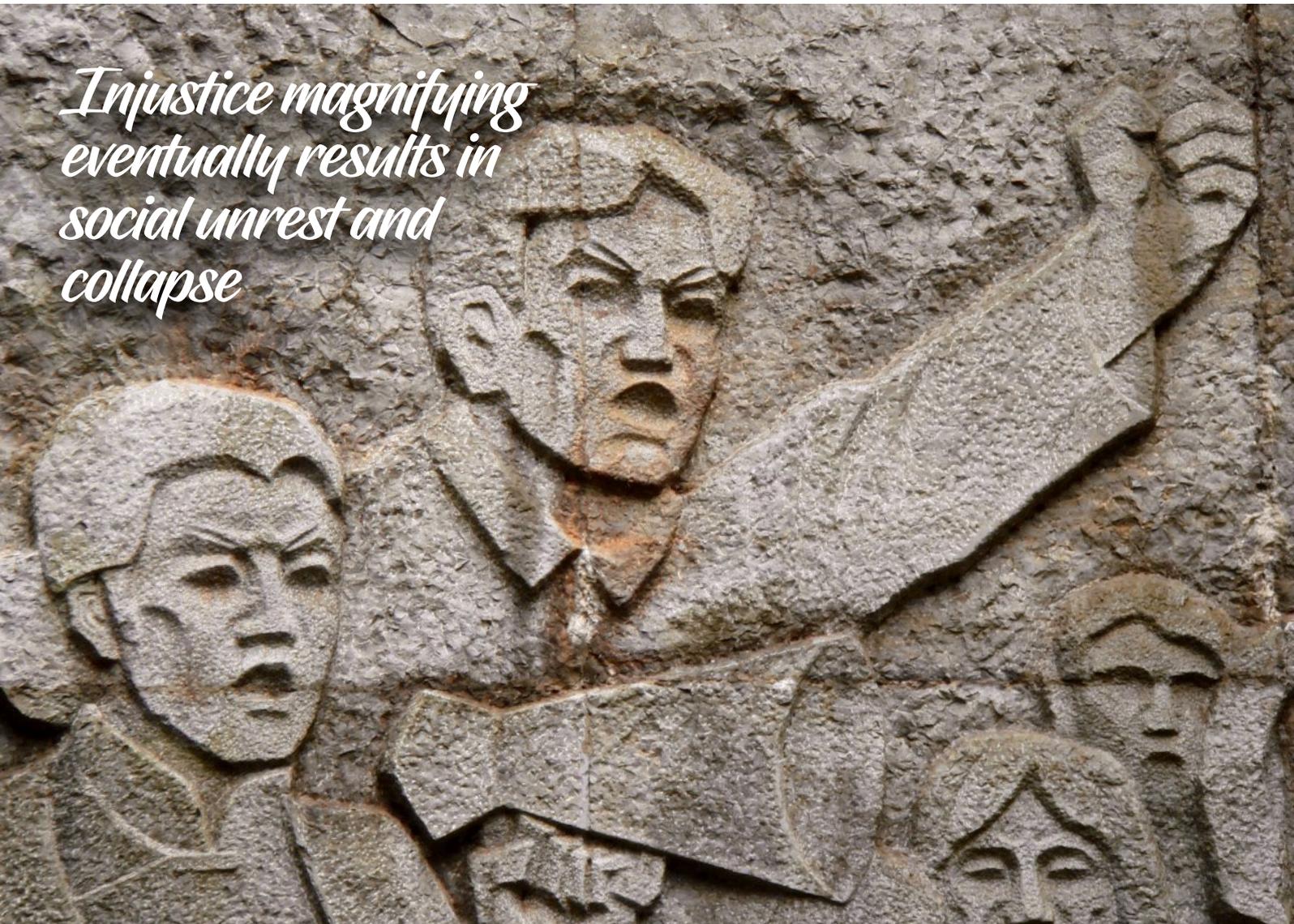
collapse in the same way that accumulated blood creates strokes and all kinds of other health problems.

An ideal situation would be a society in which vacuums were being found and filled, creating and exhausting money which flowed around, being acquired and spent, so that everyone could have what they needed. While money is considered as a thing, rather than the potential to acquire things, then its creation is a

mystery much like the magical, alchemical transformation of lead into gold.

However, if one considers money to be a vacuum-filler, there is no real need to resort to trickery or deception. The 'haves' can grow in number and the 'have nots' begin to disappear; social classes based on amounts of money start to evaporate and injustice melts away.

Injustice magnifying eventually results in social unrest and collapse



That doesn't mean that society becomes one vast egalitarian commune as Marx and Engels imagined — it means that human beings can *create* as much as they want by finding and filling vacuums.

How exactly can that happen?

In the same way that everyone is a potential customer for something, everyone can be a *provider* for someone. In other words, just as customers are motivated by vacuums, so are clever providers equipped with the

ability to seek, create and fill vacuums of various kinds. Everyone has a skill or talent or characteristic that can fill someone else's vacuum.

So everyone can generate whatever they need or want.

Isn't there a finite supply of money in the economy? Eventually, surely, an individual runs out of the funds needed to fill all his or her vacuums?

That's like saying that there is a finite number of needs in any given economy. Of course there isn't. There

are an almost infinite number of potential needs, large or small. It may take a little skill to find them, but vacuums are everywhere. And if you can't find any, they can be created or stirred into life from nothing, as we have seen.

The more vacuums you can find and fill, the more money you will have, by definition, because money is a vacuum-filler.

This obviously has profound implications, as we will see.

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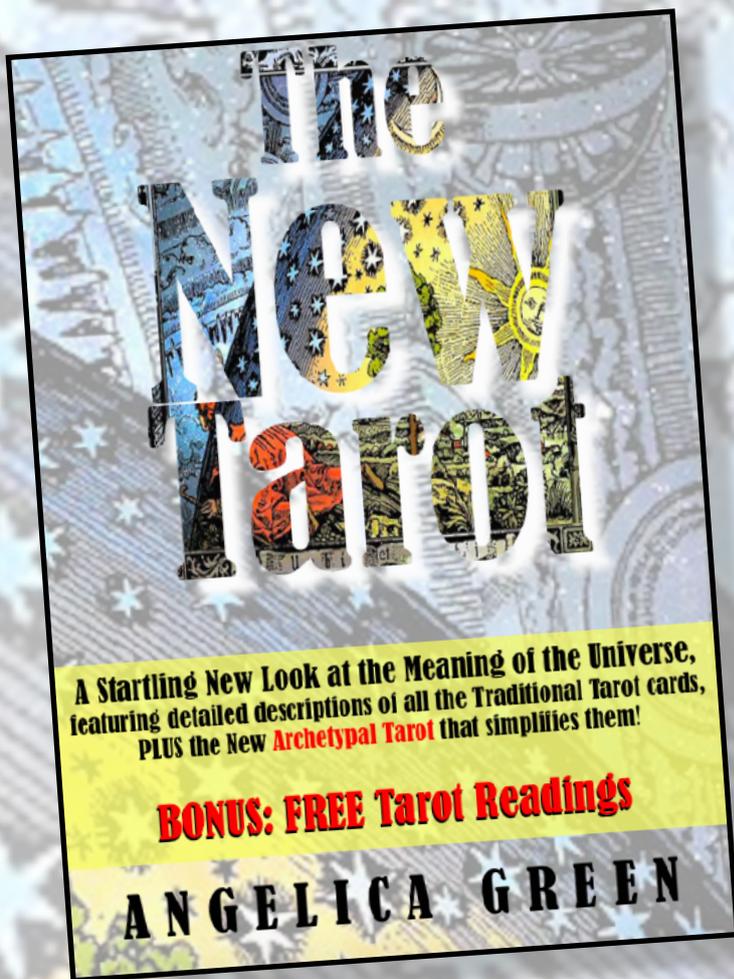
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Wilfred has always been a loner, though less of one with his late wife, Beth. She's been gone over thirty years, but he still misses her...

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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A Passion in the Desert
by Honore de Balzac



Honoré de Balzac (1799 – 1850) was a French novelist and playwright with a keen observation of detail and unfiltered representation of society. Balzac, regarded as one of the founders of realism in European literature, is renowned for his multi-faceted characters. His writing influenced many novelists including

"The whole show is dreadful," she cried, coming out of the menagerie of M. Martin. She had just been looking at that daring speculator "working with his hyena"--to speak in the style of the program.

"By what means," she continued, "can he have tamed these animals to such a point as to be certain of their affection for----."

"What seems to you a problem," said I, interrupting, "is really quite natural."

"Oh!" she cried, letting an incredulous smile wander over her lips.

"You think that beasts are wholly without passions?" I asked her. "Quite the reverse; we can communicate to them all the vices arising in our own state of civilization."

She looked at me with an air of astonishment.

"Nevertheless," I continued, "the first time I saw M. Martin, I admit, like you, I did give vent to an exclamation of surprise. I found myself next to an old soldier with the right leg amputated, who had come in with me. His face had struck me. He had one of those intrepid heads, stamped with the seal of warfare, and on which the battles of Napoleon are written. Besides, he had that frank good-humored expression which always impresses me favorably. He was without doubt one of

Émile Zola, Charles Dickens, Marcel Proust, Gustave Flaubert, and Henry James, and filmmakers François Truffaut and Jacques Rivette.

Balzac's wilful nature caused trouble throughout his life and frustrated his ambitions. He was apprenticed in a law office, but during his career as a writer, attempted to be a publisher, printer, businessman, critic, and politician, failing in them all.

Balzac suffered from health problems throughout his life, and his relationship with his family was often strained by financial and personal drama. In 1850, Balzac married Ewelina Hańska, a Polish aristocrat and his longtime love; he died in Paris six months later.

those troopers who are surprised at nothing, who find matter for laughter in the contortions of a dying comrade, who bury or plunder him quite lightheartedly, who stand intrepidly in the way of bullets; in fact, one of those men who waste no time in deliberation, and would not hesitate to make friends with the devil himself. After looking very attentively at the proprietor of the menagerie getting out of his box, my companion pursed up his lips with an air of mockery and contempt, with that peculiar and expressive twist which superior people assume to show they are not taken in. Then when I was expatiating on the courage of M. Martin, he smiled, shook his head knowingly, and said, 'Well known.'

"How 'well known'? I said. 'If you would only explain to me the mystery I should be vastly obliged.'

"After a few minutes, during which we made acquaintance, we went to dine at the first restaurateur's whose shop caught our eye. At dessert a bottle of champagne completely refreshed and brightened up the memories of this odd old soldier. He told me his story, and I said he had every reason to exclaim, 'Well known.'"

When she got home, she teased me to that extent and made so many promises that I consented to communicate to her the old soldier's confidences. Next day she received the following episode of an epic which one might call "The Frenchman in Egypt."

During the expedition in Upper Egypt under General Desaix, a Provençal soldier fell into the hands of the Mangrabins, and was taken by these Arabs into the deserts beyond the falls of the Nile.

In order to place a sufficient distance between themselves and the French army, the Mangrabins made forced marches, and only rested during the night. They camped round a well overshadowed by palm trees under which they had previously concealed a store of provisions. Not surmising that the notion of flight would occur to their prisoner, they contented themselves with binding his hands, and after eating a few dates, and giving provender to their horses, went to sleep.

When the brave Provençal saw that his enemies were no longer watching him, he made use of his teeth to steal a scimitar, fixed the blade between his knees, and cut the cords which prevented using his hands; in a moment he was free. He at once seized a rifle and dagger, then taking the precaution to provide himself with a sack of dried dates, oats, and powder and shot, and to fasten a scimitar to his waist he leaped onto a horse, and spurred on vigorously in the direction where he thought to find the French army. So impatient was he to see a bivouac again that he pressed on the already-tired courser at such speed that its flanks were lacerated with his spurs, and at last the poor animal died, leaving the Frenchman alone in the desert. After walking some time in the sand with all the courage of an escaped convict, the soldier was obliged to stop, as the day had already ended. In spite of the beauty of an Oriental sky at night, he felt he had not strength enough to go on. Fortunately he had been





able to find a small hill, on the summit of which a few palm trees shot up into the air; it was their **verdure** seen from afar which had brought hope and consolation to his heart. His fatigue was so great that he lay down upon a rock of granite, capriciously cut out like a camp bed; there he fell asleep without taking any precaution to defend himself while he slept. He had made the sacrifice of his life. His last thought was one of regret. He repented having left the mangrabins, whose nomad life seemed to smile on him now that he was afar from them and without help. He was awakened by the sun, whose pitiless rays fell with all their force on the granite and produced an intolerable heat for he had had the stupidity to place himself inversely to the shadow thrown by the verdant majestic heads of the palm trees. He looked at the solitary trees and shuddered--they reminded him of the graceful shafts crowned with foliage which characterize the **Saracen** columns in the cathedral of Arles.

But when, after counting the palm trees, he cast his eye around him, the most horrible despair was infused into his soul. Before him stretched an ocean without limit. The dark sand of the desert spread farther than sight could reach in every direction, and glittered like steel struck with a bright light. It might have been a sea of looking glass, or lakes melted together in a mirror. A fiery vapor carried up in streaks made a perpetual whirlwind over the quivering land. The sky was lit with an Oriental splendor of insupportable purity, leaving naught for the imagination to desire. Heaven and earth were on fire.

The silence was awful in its wild and terrible majesty. Infinity, immensity, closed in upon the soul from every side. Not a cloud in the sky, not a breath in the air, not a flaw on the bosom of the sand, ever moving in diminutive waves; the horizon ended as at sea on a clear day, with one line of light, definite as the cut of a sword.

The Provençal threw his arms around the trunk of one of the palm trees, as though it were the body of a friend, and then in the shelter of the thin straight shadow that the palm cast upon the granite, he wept. Then sitting down he remained as he was, contemplating with profound sadness the implacable scene, which was all he had to look upon. He cried aloud, to measure the solitude. His voice, lost in the hollows of the hill, sounded faintly, and aroused no echo--the echo was in his own heart. The Provençal was twenty-two years old; he loaded his carbine.

"There'll be time enough," he said to himself, laying on the ground the weapon which alone could bring him deliverance.

Looking by turns at the black expanse and the blue expanse, the soldier dreamed of France--he smelled with delight the gutters of Paris--he remembered the towns through which he had passed, the faces of his fellow soldiers, the most minute details of his life. His southern fancy soon showed him the stones of his beloved Provence, in the play of the heat which waved over the spread sheet of the desert. Fearing the danger of this cruel mirage, he went down the opposite side of the hill to that by which he had come up the day before. The remains of a rug showed that this place of refuge had at one time been inhabited; at a short distance he saw some palm trees full of dates. Then the instinct which binds us to life awoke again in his heart. He hoped to live long enough to await the passing of some Arabs, or perhaps he might hear the sound of cannon, for at this time Bonaparte was traversing Egypt.





This thought gave him new life. The palm tree seemed to bend with the weight of the ripe fruit. He shook some of it down. When he tasted this unhopèd-for manna, he felt sure that the palms had been cultivated by a former inhabitant--the savory, fresh meat of the dates was proof of the care of his predecessor. He passed suddenly from dark despair to an almost insane joy. He went up again to the top of the hill, and spent the rest of the day in cutting down one of the sterile palm trees, which the night before had served him for shelter. A vague memory made him think of the animals of the desert; and in case they might come to drink at the spring, visible from the base of the rocks but lost farther down, he resolved to guard himself from their visits by placing a barrier at the entrance of his hermitage.

In spite of his diligence, and the strength which the fear of being devoured asleep gave him, he was unable to cut the palm in pieces, though he succeeded in cutting it down. At eventide the king of the desert fell; the sound of its fall resounded far and wide, like a sign the solitude; the soldier shuddered as though he had heard some voice predicting woe.

But like an heir who does not long bewail a deceased parent, he tore off from this beautiful tree the tall broad green leaves which are its poetic adornment, and used them to mend the mat on which he was to sleep.

Fatigued by the heat and his work, he fell asleep under the red curtains of his wet cave.

In the middle of the night his sleep was troubled by an extraordinary noise; he sat up, and the deep silence around him allowed him to distinguish the alternative accents of a respiration whose savage energy could not belong to a human creature.

A profound terror, increased still further by the darkness, the silence, and his waking images, froze his heart within him. He almost felt his hair stand on end, when by straining his eyes to their utmost he perceived through the shadows two faint yellow lights. At first he attributed these lights to the reflection of his own pupils, but soon the vivid brilliance of the night aided him gradually to distinguish the objects around him in the cave, and he beheld a huge animal lying but two steps from him. Was it a lion, a tiger, or a crocodile?

The Provençal was not educated enough to know under what species his enemy ought to be classed; but his fright was all the greater, as his ignorance led him to imagine an terrors at once; he endured a cruel torture, noting every variation of the breathing close to him without daring to make the slightest movement. An odor, pungent like that of a fox, but more penetrating, profounder--so to speak--filled the cave, and when the Provençal became sensible of this, his terror reached its height, for he could not longer doubt the proximity of a terrible companion, whose royal dwelling served him for shelter.

Presently the reflection of the moon, descending on the horizon, lit up the den, rendering gradually visible and resplendent the spotted skin of a panther.

This lion of Egypt slept, curled up like a big dog, the peaceful possessor of a sumptuous niche at the gate of a hotel; its eyes opened for a moment and closed again; its face was turned toward the man. A thousand confused thoughts passed through the Frenchman's mind first he thought of killing it with a bullet from his gun, but he saw there was not enough distance between them for him to take proper aim--the shot would miss the mark. And if it were to wake!--the thought made his limbs rigid. He listened to his own heart beating in the midst of the silence, and cursed the too violent pulsations which the flow of blood brought on, fearing to disturb that sleep which allowed him time to think of some means of escape.





Twice he placed his hand on his scimitar, intending to cut off the head of his enemy; but the difficulty of cutting stiff, short hair compelled him to abandon this daring project. To miss would be to die for *certain*, he thought; he preferred the chances of fair fight, and made up his mind to wait till morning; the morning did not leave him long to wait.

He could now examine the panther at ease; its muzzle was smeared with blood.

"She's had a good dinner," he thought, without troubling himself as to whether her feast might have been on human flesh. "She won't be hungry when she gets up."

It was a female. The fur on her belly and flanks was glistening white; many small marks like velvet formed beautiful bracelets round her feet; her sinuous tail was also white, ending with black rings; the overpart of her dress, yellow like unburnished gold, very *lissome* and soft, had the characteristic blotches the form of rosettes which distinguish the panther from every other feline species.

This tranquil and formidable hostess snored in an attitude as graceful as that of a cat lying on a cushion. Her bloodstained paws, nervous and well armed, were stretched out before her face, which rested upon them, and from which radiated her straight, slender whiskers, like threads of silver.

If she had been like that in a cage, the Provençal would doubtless have admired the grace of the animal, and the vigorous contrasts of vivid color which gave her robe an imperial splendor; but just then his sight was troubled by her sinister appearance.

The presence of the panther, even asleep, could not fail to produce the effect which the magnetic eyes of the serpent are said to have on the nightingale.

For a moment the courage of the soldier began to fail before this danger, though no doubt it would have risen at the mouth of a cannon charged with shell. Nevertheless, a bold thought brought daylight in his soul and sealed up the source of the cold sweat which sprang forth on his brow. Like men driven to bay who defy death and offer their body to the smiter, so he, seeing in this merely a tragic episode, resolved to play his part with honor to the last.

"The day before yesterday the Arabs would have killed me perhaps," he said; so considering himself as good as dead already, he waited bravely, with excited curiosity his enemy's awakening.

When the sun appeared, the panther suddenly opened her eyes; then she put out her paws with energy, as if to stretch them and get rid of cramp. At last she yawned, showing the formidable apparatus of her teeth and pointed tongue, rough as a file.

"A regular *petite maîtresse*," thought the Frenchman, seeing her roll herself about so softly and coquettishly. She licked off the blood which stained her paws and muzzle, and scratched her head with reiterated gestures full of prettiness. "All right, make a little toilet," the Frenchman said to himself, beginning to recover his gaiety with his courage; "we'll say good morning to each other presently," and he seized the small, short dagger which he had taken from the Mangrabins. At this moment the panther turned her head toward the man and looked at him fixedly without moving.





The rigidity of her metallic eyes and their insupportable luster made him shudder, especially when the animal walked toward him. But he looked at her caressingly, staring into her eyes in order to magnetize her, and let her come quite close to him; then with a movement both gentle and amorous, as though he were caressing the most beautiful of women, he passed his hand over her whole body, from the head to the tail, scratching the flexible vertebrae which divided the panther's yellow back. The animal waved her tail voluptuously, and her eyes grew gentle; and when for the third time the Frenchman accomplished this interesting flattery, she gave forth one of those purrings by which our cats express their pleasure; but this murmur issued from a throat so powerful and so deep that it resounded through the cave like the last vibrations of an organ in a church. The man, understanding the importance of his caresses, redoubled them in such a way as to surprise and stupefy his imperious courtesan. When he felt sure of having extinguished the ferocity of his capricious companion, whose hunger had so fortunately been satisfied the day before, he got up to go out of the cave; the panther let him go out, but when he had reached the summit of the hill she sprang with the lightness of a sparrow hopping from twig to twig, and rubbed herself against his legs, putting up her back after the manner of all the race of cats. Then regarding her guest with eyes whose glare had softened a little, she gave vent to that wild cry which naturalists compare to the grating of a saw.

"She is exacting," said the Frenchman, smilingly.

He was bold enough to play with her ears; he caressed her belly and scratched her head as hard as he could.

When he saw that he was successful, he tickled her skull with the point of his dagger, watching for the right moment to kill her, but the hardness of her bones made him tremble for his success.

The sultana of the desert showed herself gracious to her slave; she lifted her head, stretched out her and manifested her delight by - the tranquility of her attitude. It suddenly occurred to the soldier that to kill this savage princess with one blow he must poignard her in the throat.

He raised the blade, when the panther, satisfied no doubt, laid herself gracefully at his feet, and cast up at him glances in which, in spite of their natural fierceness, was mingled confusedly a kind of good will. The poor Provençal ate his dates, leaning against one of the palm trees, and casting his eyes alternately on the desert in quest of some liberator and on his terrible companion to watch her uncertain clemency.

The panther looked at the place where the date stones fell, and every time that he threw one down her eyes expressed an incredible mistrust.

She examined the man with an almost commercial prudence. However, this examination was favorable to him, for when he had finished his meager meal she licked his boots with her powerful rough tongue, brushing off with marvelous skill the dust gathered in the creases.

"Ah, but when she's really hungry!" thought the Frenchman. In spite of the shudder this thought caused him, the soldier began to measure curiously the proportions of the panther, certainly one of the most splendid specimens of its race. She was three feet high and four feet long without counting her tail; this powerful weapon, rounded like a cudgel, was nearly three feet long. The head, large as that of a lioness, was distinguished by a rare expression of refinement. The cold cruelty of a tiger was dominant, it was true, but there was also a vague resemblance to the face of a sensual woman. Indeed, the face of this solitary queen had something of the gaiety of a drunken Nero: she had satiated herself with blood, and she wanted to play.





The soldier tried if he might walk up and down, and the panther left him free, contenting herself with following him with her eyes, less like a faithful dog than a big Angora cat, observing everything and every movement of her master.

When he looked around, he saw, by the spring, the remains of his horse; the panther had dragged the carcass all that way; about two thirds of it had been devoured already. The sight reassured him.

It was easy to explain the panther's absence, and the respect she had had for him while he slept. The first piece of good luck emboldened him to tempt the future, and he conceived the wild hope of continuing on good terms with the panther during the entire day, neglecting no means of taming her, and remaining her good graces.

He returned to her, and had the unspeakable joy of seeing her wag her tail with an almost imperceptible movement at his approach. He sat down then, without fear, by her side, and they began to play together; he took her paws and muzzle, pulled her ears, rolled her over on her back, stroked her warm, delicate flanks. She let him do what ever he liked, and when he began to stroke the hair on her feet she drew her claws in carefully.

The man, keeping the dagger in one hand, thought to plunge it into the belly of the too-confiding panther, but he was afraid that he would be immediately strangled in her last conclusive struggle; besides, he felt in his heart a sort of remorse which bid him respect a creature that had done him no harm. He seemed to have found a friend, in a boundless desert; half unconsciously he thought of his first sweetheart, whom he had nicknamed "Mignonne" by way of contrast, because she was so atrociously jealous that all the time of their love he was in fear of the knife with which she had always threatened him.

This memory of his early days suggested to him the idea of making the young panther answer to this name, now that he began to admire with less terror her swiftness, suppleness, and softness. Toward the end of the day he had familiarized himself with his perilous position; he now almost liked the painfulness of it. At last his companion had got into the habit of looking up at him whenever he cried in a falsetto voice, "Mignonne."

At the setting of the sun Mignonne gave, several times running, a profound melancholy cry. "She's been well brought up," said the lighthearted soldier; "she says her prayers." But this mental joke only occurred to him when he noticed what a pacific attitude his companion remained in. "Come, *ma petite blonde*, I'll let you go to bed first," he said to her, counting on the activity of his own legs to run away as quickly as possible, directly she was asleep, and seek another shelter for the night.

The soldier waited with impatience the hour of his flight, and when it had arrived he walked vigorously in the direction of the Nile; but hardly had he made a quarter of a league in the sand when he heard the panther bounding after him, crying with that sawlike cry more dreadful even than the sound of her leaping.

"Ah!" he said, "then she's taken a fancy to me, she has never met anyone before, and it is really quite flattering to have her first love."

That instant the man fell into one, of those movable quicksands so terrible to travelers and from which it is impossible to save oneself. Feeling himself caught, he gave a shriek of alarm; the panther seized him with her teeth by the collar, and, springing vigorously backward, drew him as if by magic out of the whirling sand.





"Ah, Mignonne!" cried the soldier, caressing her enthusiastically, "we're bound together for life and death but no jokes, mind!" and he retraced his steps.

From that time the desert seemed inhabited. It contained a being to whom the man could talk, and whose ferocity was rendered gentle by him, though he could not explain to himself the reason for their strange friendship. Great as was the soldier's desire to stay upon guard, he slept.

On awakening he could not find Mignonne; he mounted the hill, and in the distance saw her springing toward him after the habit of these animals, who cannot run on account of the extreme flexibility of the vertebral column. Mignonne arrived, her jaws covered with blood; she received the wonted caress of her companion, showing with much purring how happy it made her. Her eyes, full of languor, turned still more gently than the day before toward the Provençal who talked to her as one would to a tame animal.

"Ah! Mademoiselle, you are a nice girl, aren't you? Just look at that! So we like to be made much of, don't we? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? So you have been eating some Arab or other, have you? That doesn't matter. They're animals just the same as you are; but don't you take to eating Frenchmen, or I shan't like you any longer."

She played like a dog with its master, letting herself be rolled over, knocked about, and stroked, alternately; sometimes she herself would provoke the soldier, putting up her paw with a soliciting gesture.

Some days passed in this manner. This companionship permitted the Provençal to appreciate the sublime beauty of the desert; now that he had a living thing to think about, alternations of fear and quiet, and plenty to eat, his mind became filled with contrast and his life began to be diversified.

Solitude revealed to him all her secrets, and enveloped him in her delights. He discovered in the rising and setting of the sun sights unknown to the world. He knew what it was to tremble when he heard over his head the hiss of a bird's wing, so rarely did they pass, or when he saw the clouds, changing and many-colored travelers, melt one into another. He studied in the night time the effect of the moon upon the ocean of sand, where the simoom made waves swift of movement and rapid in their change. He lived the life of the Eastern day, marveling at its wonderful pomp; then, after having reveled in the sight of a hurricane over the plain where the whirling sands made red, dry mists and death-bearing clouds, he would welcome the night with joy, for then fell the healthful freshness of the stars, and he listened to imaginary music in the skies. Then solitude taught him to unroll the treasures of dreams. He passed whole hours in remembering mere nothings, and comparing his present life with his past.

At last he grew passionately fond of the panther; for some sort of affection was a necessity.

Whether it was that his will powerfully projected had modified the character of his companion, or whether, because she found abundant food in her predatory excursions in the desert, she respected the man's life, he began to fear for it no longer, seeing her so well tamed.

He devoted the greater part of his time to sleep, but he was obliged to watch like a spider knits web that the moment of his deliverance might not escape him, if anyone should pass the line marked by the horizon. He had sacrificed his shirt to make a flag with, which he hung at the top of a palm tree, whose foliage he had torn off. Taught by necessity, he found the means of keeping it spread out, by fastening it with little sticks; for the wind might not be blowing at the moment when the passing traveler was looking through the desert.





It was during the long hours, when he had abandoned hope, that he amused himself with the panther. He had come to learn the different inflections of her voice, the expressions of her eyes; he had studied the capricious patterns of all the rosettes which marked the gold of her robe. Mignonne was not even angry when he took hold of the tuft at the end of her tail to count her rings, those graceful ornaments which glittered in the sun like jewelry. It gave him pleasure to contemplate the supple, fine outlines of her form, the whiteness of her belly, the graceful pose of her head. But it was especially when she was playing that he felt most pleasure in looking at her; the agility and youthful lightness of her movements were a continual surprise to him; he wondered at the supple way in which she jumped and climbed, washed herself and arranged her fur, crouched down and prepared to spring. However rapid her spring might be, however slippery the stone she was on, she would always stop short at the word "Mignonne."

One day, in a bright midday sun, an enormous bird coursed through the air. The man left his panther to look at this new guest; but after waiting a moment the deserted sultana growled deeply.

"My goodness! I do believe she's jealous," he cried, seeing her eyes become hard again; "the soul of Virginie has passed into her body; that's certain."

The eagle disappeared into the air, while the soldier admired the curved contour of the panther.

But there was such youth and grace in her form! she was beautiful as a woman! The blond fur of her robe mingled well with the delicate tints of faint white which marked her flanks.

The profuse light cast down by the sun made this living gold, these russet markings, to burn in a way to give them an indefinable attraction.

The man and the panther looked at one another with a look full of meaning; the coquette quivered when she felt her friend stroke her head; her eyes flashed like lightning--then she shut them tightly.

"She has a soul," he said, looking at the stillness of this queen of the sands, golden like them, white like them, solitary and burning like them.

*

"Well," she said, "I have read your plea in favor of beasts; but how did two so well adapted to understand each other end?"

"Ah, well! you see, they ended as all great passions do end— by a misunderstanding. For some reason one suspects the other of treason; they don't come to an explanation through pride, and quarrel and part from sheer obstinacy."

"Yet sometimes at the best moments a single word or a look is enough--but anyhow go on with your story."

"It's horribly difficult, but you will understand, after what the old villain told me over his champagne.

"He said-- 'I don't know if I hurt her, but she turned round, as if enraged, and with her sharp

teeth caught hold of my leg--gently, I daresay; but I, thinking she would devour me, plunged my dagger into her throat. She rolled over, giving a cry that froze my heart; and I saw her dying, still looking at me without anger. I would have given all the world--my cross even, which I lied not then--to have brought her to life again. It was as though I had murdered a real person; and the soldiers who had seen my flag, and were come to my assistance, found me in tears.'

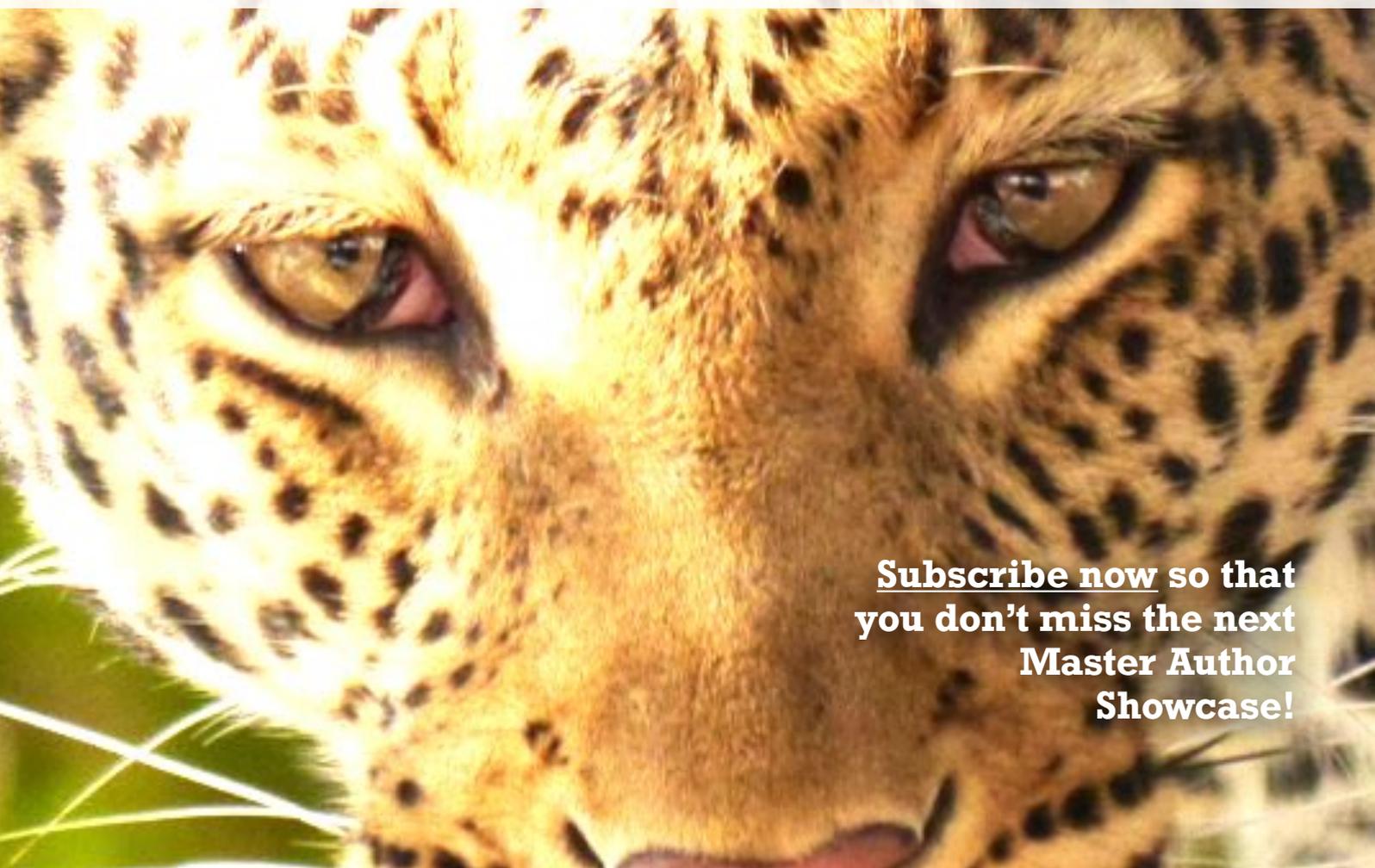
"'Well sir,' he said, after a moment of silence, 'since then I have been in war in Germany, in Spain, in Russia, in France; I've certainly carried my carcass about a good deal, but never have I seen anything like the desert. Ah! yes, it is very beautiful!'

" 'What did you feel there?' I asked him.

"'Oh! that can't be described, young man. Besides, I am not always regretting my palm trees and my panther. I should have to be very melancholy for that. In the desert, you see, there is everything and nothing.'

Yes, but explain----'

"'Well,' he said, with an impatient gesture, 'it is God without mankind.'"



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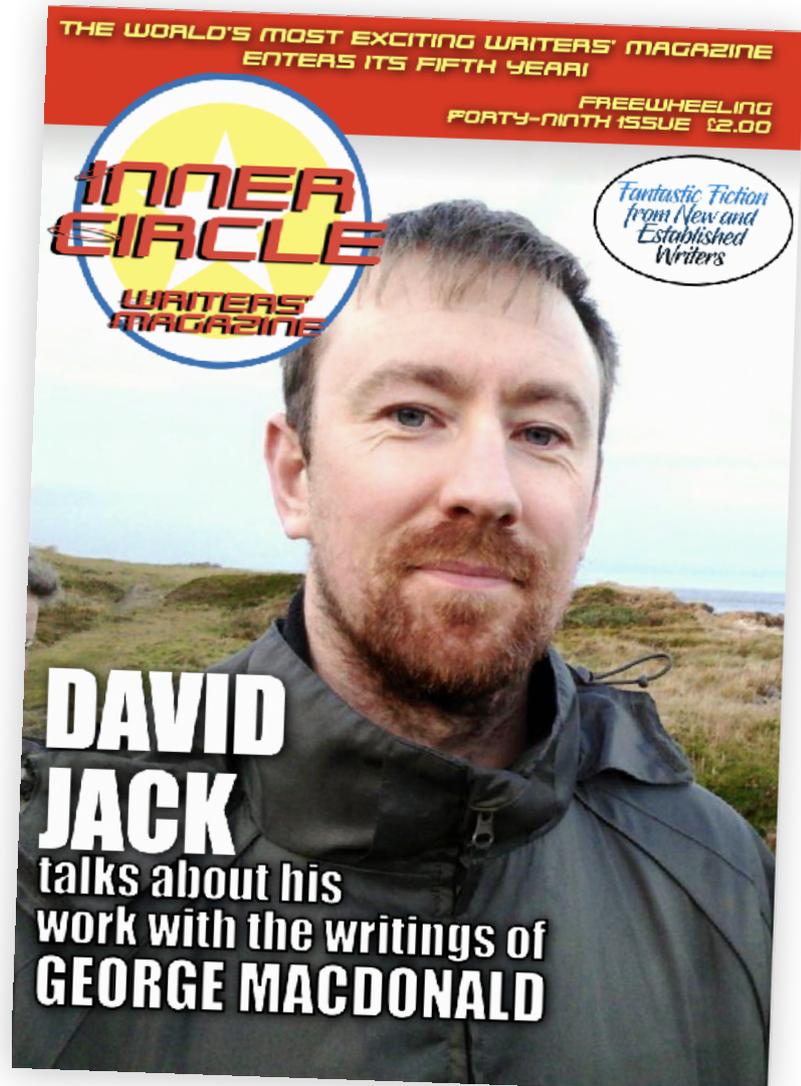
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