

The Sirens Call



February 2012

Premiere E-Zine

cover price \$2.99



Featuring:

*Short Stories of Horror
and Flash Fiction
from Indie Authors
around the globe.*

*Original Art Work
& Photography*

*An interview with
the author of
"Days with the Undead"
Julianne Snow*

*A peek into
the Editorial minds of
those of us at SCP!*

www.SirensCallPublications.com

TWISTED REALITIES OF MYTH AND MONSTROSITY



edited by Kate Monroe

Available May 2012 www.sirenscaipublications.com

Editorials

- 4 Welcome to *The Sirens Call*
 6 *The Horrors of Writing* – Nina D’Arcangela
 8 *Reading: A Communal But Solitary Experience* – Kalla Monahan
 10 *How Much Is Too Much?* – Kate Monroe

The Fiction

- 13 **Colin F. Barnes** – *The Trapper*
 “Some things just don’t want to be found...”
 17 **Nina D’Arcangela** – *Ripping*
 “It wasn’t supposed to be like this. It shouldn’t have happened to me...”
 22 **Julianne Snow** – *The Bermuda Dimension*
 “We’re not allowed to warn the next one. Those are the rules...”
 28 **Robert Ropars** – *The Propagation*
 “It was only a matter of time, now that they had broken forth...”
 30 **Edward Lorn** – *What The Dark Brings*
 “There’s good reason to be afraid of the dark...”
 33 **Kate Monroe** – *Shades of Grey*
 “So much power in a name, and so much fear...”
 38 **One Photograph, Three Original Stories**
Odonates, On The Wings of Icarus & The Tango of the Hunt
 42 **Kimber Vale** – *Mental Floss*
 “She would do anything to free herself of his hold on her mind...”
 45 **Alex Woodf** – *A Kindle For Christmas*
 “He was presented with the perfect solution, but hidden dangers lurked in wait ..”
 49 **Shah Wharton** – *The Dead Party*
 “Everything’s changed, since the Dead Party took control...”
 59 **Kalla Monahan** – *The Break*
 “Exposed and alone in this strange new world, all he wanted was to go back to Arm...”

Interview

- 61 Julianne Snow

Original Art Work

- 53 *Zombies* – Eddie Rotten and Jennifer Howser

Photography

- 3 *Burnt Book* – Nina D’Arcangela
 16 *Jaws* – Nina D’Arcangela
 20 *Dentist* – Nina D’Arcangela
 38 *Algonquin Dragonfly* – Irene Snow
 48 *Doors* – Nina D’Arcangela
 66 Credits

Welcome to *The Sirens Call*

Unlike most Publishing companies, we like to think of ourselves as a cooperative of indie authors. We have the know-how to help other authors grab a piece of the success pie that's floating around thanks to the advent of not only more convenient print publishing, but the electronic publishing blitz that's going on these days.

Just about anyone is able to 'self-publish', and that's a great thing! But where we come in is in the varied skill set we bring to your publishing efforts by promoting your work so that you can joyfully write without worrying about learning how to format for different publishing platforms, setting up your own blog tour, finding ways to cross-promote yourself all on your own, or even something as common place in the publishing world as ferreting out your own *good* editor – we do all that for you!

Our Publicist, Kalla Monahan, has an extensive network of contacts to ensure that we get the *right people* talking about your work. She'll use those contacts to assist you and your work in getting reviews and announcements on websites as well as set up a blog tour in your genre's community. The goal is to ensure all those that should hear about your work, do.

Our Chief Editor, Kate Monroe, is extremely adept at what she does and has a wonderful knack for editing in a global tone; so no matter what cadence your story is written in, she can edit it *properly and professionally* – and, when necessary, very quickly.

Our Social Media Coordinator, Nina D'Arcangela, will make sure that if you publish with us, your book will be known about far and wide. She's our "squawker", and the one who will put the spin on your work so that everyone hears about it – not just in the publishing community.

We also work with a group of go-to individuals who can handle cover design, ad creation, ghost writing if need be, and a little bit of brain juice to bounce you in the right direction when you might find yourself a little stuck.

Our goal is to be a one-stop support team for all of our authors. We don't ask for any up front costs that you don't specifically wish to incur, and our business model is simple: If you succeed, we succeed... and we want to succeed, so guess what – we'll do our damndest to make sure you do!

We are always accepting open submissions for novels, novellas, and short stories; as well as offering our authors free exposure in our bi-monthly E-Zine.

We're all about supporting those that jump on board with us – so why not give it a try? It's a fun ride!

Kalla, Kate & Nina

The Sirens Call



*April 2012
cover price \$2.99*



Featuring:

*Short Stories from the
perspective of
"The Observer"*

*Original Art Work
& Photography*

*An interview with
our featured author
Kate Monroe*

*The Editorial musings of
the ladies of
Sirens Call Publications*

www.SirensCallPublications.com

Sirens Call Publications is now accepting
submissions for its next issue featuring
stories told from the perspective of the
Observer.

www.sirensallpublications.com

THE HORRORS OF WRITING

BY NINA D'ARCANGELA

Hi Guys, Nina D here! If you've been following SCP's progress, you may have run into me lurking around a dark dingy alley on Twitter, or hunting down new friends on Facebook; if not - come visit me as @Sotet_Angyal or Nina D'Arcangela.

So the topic is "The Horrors of Writing"... Like my other cohorts who founded SCP, I am a writer, and my preferred genre is Horror. That being said, it seems natural that I'd write about being a Horror Writer - but that's not where I'm headed with this one. What I'm really talking about here is the abject fear of putting your thoughts and emotions into words and tossing them out there for the whole world to love, hate, or just not give a damn about.

Writing is something I've done my entire life, and it's a very personal experience for me - whether it's scribbling random thoughts on scraps of paper, or rewording the lyrics to a song because it makes me chuckle, or sometimes just recording my own impressions of things I've seen, heard or experienced, so I could revisit them time and time again in my own twisted little corner of the world. My house is littered with journals, small, large, and all sizes in between. "No wait, don't throw out that receipt, I wrote something important on that..." But show them to other people? A sudden gasp escapes me followed by a look of abject fear that crosses my face - Never! Are you kidding me... those people out there are mean and I've seen them kicking kittens! These words

are my babies, I cherish them; it's like asking a mother to take her newborn out on a freezing wintry night - in the sleet and snow none the less! Unh uh, no way, not me... let others write and I'll just imagine how wonderful it would feel to have someone adore my words the way I adore theirs... Ahhhh, but therein lies the rub. I want that adoration for something I hold dear, not for me, but for the words themselves. "Have you ever felt this way about...? Would you dream up the same wicked demons I do? Does yours look, act, and feel like mine does? Do you 'get' where I'm coming from and what the underlying emotions of my words really are?" The need to share and be shared with is palpable --- "Why aren't you answering me, I have to know!" But, until very recently, you couldn't answer because I wouldn't write - not for you anyway, only for myself - little words that were tucked away in little places that no one was allowed to peek into.

As I write this I'm laughing to myself at my own fear because the few who have read my words and understood what I've genuinely tried to express have been very kind and encouraging... so why the pangs of anxiety, why are my palms sweating? No, it's not because I just met you on Twitter! It's because every time I sit down to write in the sense that I am genuinely expressing myself, that snarky little imp inside me starts dancing around in a circle singing "you're not good enough"... and it's a tune I really, I mean *REALLY*, hate to hear - but it's

an important one, because it makes me strive to be better at something that I truly love doing.

So with shoulders tensed, back ramrod straight, eyes wide and glazed, maybe even nibbling on a finger tip or two, I sit down in front of this beast known by the name 'f'ing computer' and think to myself, "Crap - now I have to write something that others are going to want to read - my secret little pixie world is about to be invaded by giant trolls... help!" Cold sweat breaks out, my heart starts racing a mile a minute, my mind is spinning - what am I going to write about? The angst almost drives me away from the glowing pixels that are trying to suck my brain clean out of my eye sockets. And then it hits me... no, not a stroke of genius - or a stroke of any other kind - but a moment in which my mind clears, my fingers start moving across the keyboard, my brain engages, and the fear dissipates. I've found a topic - not just a "hey, can you re-word this for me", but a real topic. One I can feel deep down inside, one that is screaming to get out, one that is giving me no choice but to write about it.

Phew - I was really starting to sweat getting here. So now I'm writing, the words are flowing, dark moody music is thrumming through me, my emotions are singing to the world, all is good; then "Oh crap" happens again - I get stuck... what was that word I wanted to use? What was the full gist of where I was taking this passage? Did I feed my cat? No wait, wrong train of thought... and the cycle starts all over again. But

once my groove kicks back in and I can feel where the words want to go, my angst becomes a cry of joy not sorrow. I'm actually doing it, and ya know what - it's not really that scary! It's like a brand new flavor of ice cream; you have to start out slow, taste it a bit skeptically, then once you've decided you like it, you let every little burst of flavor smack you square between the eyes; and you relish in the brain freeze because now that you've tasted it, it's time to gobble! And if the next guy in line doesn't order the same flavor, so be it - more for me.

Is writing a horror? Sometimes. Other times it's just a matter of going with the flow. "So Nina, do you think you can write an editorial for our first E-Zine?" - "Not a problem, I got this ...oh, crap!"



Nina D'Arcangela

*Social Media Coordinator,
Sirens Call Publications*

READING: A SOLITARY BUT COMMUNAL EXPERIENCE

BY KALLA MONAHAN

Let me ask you a question: have you ever belonged to a book club? And I'm not talking about the type of book club where you order books via the mail. I mean the member driven ones that require everyone to read the same book and then meet to discuss it. Now, I want you to think back to the days of high school and university where you were required to take English classes. (To those of you not from Canada, an English class is where we learned about grammar and read assigned books, poetry, and plays. If you didn't grow up in Canada, please insert your best frame of reference to what I've just described and think on that.) As required you read the books, and then as a class you discussed it. Simple, right? I maintain that it's just not that simple.

You see to me, reading is both a solitary and communal entity. When you read, you're forming ideas, thoughts, judgments, and impressions based solely on your own perspectives and perceptions. You may connect with a singular character and find another reprehensible. In terms of the personal venture, you get what you get out of that particular work. Certain aspects are likely to stick with you because you are inherently you.

I believe that it's interesting and to an extent eye opening to hear or read how one's thoughts, judgments, ideas and impressions have shaped the understanding and opinion of a particular piece of literature. Each of us is bound to get something different out of each book that we read. It's our commonalities along with our

differences that make us individuals and those are bound to bleed into our understanding.

Think for a moment on your experiences in school. Ever gotten back a paper that you wrote on a specific book, one that you worked really hard on and spent hours analyzing within your young adult mindset, only to get it back and discover that your grade didn't reflect that time and effort? I'm not going to lie, it's happened to me and it's maddeningly frustrating. At the time, I can remember wondering (not aloud of course) how I could have been so wrong in my impressions and ultimately my judgments. It wasn't until I got older and recognized that my own worldview was bound to shape the understanding I derived from every book that I finished.

How can I, as a thirty-something woman, find the same meanings as a middle-aged man? Certain meanings are bound to be universal but how does one connect with a character they share no common ground with? How does one identify with a situation they have never experienced? Does gender and age make a difference? Of course it does. I cannot speak directly on gender differences but I did read many of the literary 'greats' at an early age, understanding them within the constraints of the developed brain I had. Reading those works again in later life has deepened and in some instances, changed my own perceived meanings.

Going back to the whole idea of the book club, the reason for their

existence is clearer; not to tell us what we should be taking away from a particular book but to enrich the experience of reading it. The communal experience opens our eyes to the perspectives that we may have missed because our own perceptions that made us connect with the story in a different way. There are bound to be instances of the commonality of the shared experience but there will always be something that we individually take away. Never let go of that; keep it for yourself and cherish your own meanings. They are unique as you are.

That brings us to the discussion the author's intended message. I'm not sure of any author, alive or dead that would belittle the message you took from their book (to do so would be a sure-fire way to alienate readers). Do they write with an intended message? I would say the answer to that is a resounding yes! However, a wise author is going to allow for the fact that we are all going to connect to their work in an individual way. At least that is how I feel; it's just my humble and honest opinion.

Especially if you take into account the different genres that exist in literature today. In order for certain works to have the desired impact, they need to unsettle, to excite, or to confuse the reader. There are some things that will universally scare, excite, and confuse most of us but to expect that those things will evoke those feelings in all of us is ludicrous. Take into account the degree to which we, as a society, are desensitized to

violence and sex. That desensitization will cause authors to continually push the proverbial envelope in order to get us to identify with the characters they create. One hundred years ago, works that were deemed acceptable in their levels of violence and sexual content would have been seen as depraved and likely never been published or openly discussed.

Communal experiences can account for a lot but in the end, we each take individual meaning from the books that we read. In the end, our age, gender and class all play a role in how ascribe meaning to specific works. Our perceptions shape us into the individuals that we are and in turn, shape the meanings of everything we touch, including literature. Think on that for a moment as you crack open the next book in your queue.

Kalla Monahan

*Publicist,
Sirens Call Publications*



HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

BY KATE MONROE

Gore.

Love it or loathe it, it seems to be everywhere you look these days - filmmakers are relying upon shock tactics to seize the attention of their jaded audiences, so blasé and disenchanted with the tactics of old. The fake blood and over-dramatics of days gone by no longer have the effects that they did in the time of Hammer Horror, Hitchcock and the like. You want an example? Human Centipede, anyone?

But for me, it's the literary that entrances me as opposed to the visual portrayal of a story played out on the screen. Don't get me wrong; I have the greatest of respect for filmmakers, and I have as keen an appreciation for what I see with my eyes as the next person - but when it comes to a tale to be told, I far prefer that to be sketched out on paper to take flight in my own imagination.

That means, though, that whenever I'm working on a piece of horror, I invariably have an internal struggle over precisely how detailed I should make that sketch. Should I put all my effort into exhaustively detailing even the smallest of details down onto the page, using the same tactics as those aforementioned filmmakers -or is it better for an author to trust in their reader and allow the story to come to life in their mind, even if by doing so it might not be quite as you intended it to be?

And does it even matter so long as the reader enjoys the story?

I debated with myself about just that dilemma over and over again; but of late, I reached a conclusive answer by approaching the question as a *reader*, not only as a writer. What I love most when reading a story is becoming engrossed in it, and watching the characters and the storyline come to life in my head. If the

author is overly florid or extreme in their descriptions, then I find myself drifting away from the plot; and I think that when that happens, some of the psychological impact of what you read is inevitably lost.

Going back through an old draft last week, I pared down the gore until it was almost non-existent, and I found myself with a final edit that I felt worked far better as a horror tale. For me, it's the stark bluntness of the pared back description that really works, as opposed to an over elaborate description of every spurt of blood and the precise shade and shape of the entrails as they soar and splatter across the (always white) walls.

Well-chosen words are beautiful. They hold such incredible power, and an author has the responsibility to ensure that they utilize them wisely. A great man once said to a prime minister, "I could bring down your government with a single word." Okay, so the Doctor needed to use six (and it was actually science fiction) but those six little words were enough to do just that. Six words that held far more impact because they were used so concisely and simply.

When just six words can do so little, it pains me that so many horror authors of late seem to feel the need to overload their story with so much unnecessary description. As both an editor and a reader, I would far rather see a truly witty and penetrative piece of prose than read a story filled with adjectives simply because the author feels they're necessary to carry the plot, particularly in the confines of short stories like those you'll read in the Sirens Call e-zine. In my opinion, authors need to have the confidence in their story-telling skills to take a step back and allow their words to flourish in the reader's mind; because if they're good enough, they undoubtedly will. If they're

not, then authors should have enough respect for themselves and their readers not to put them out there until they are.

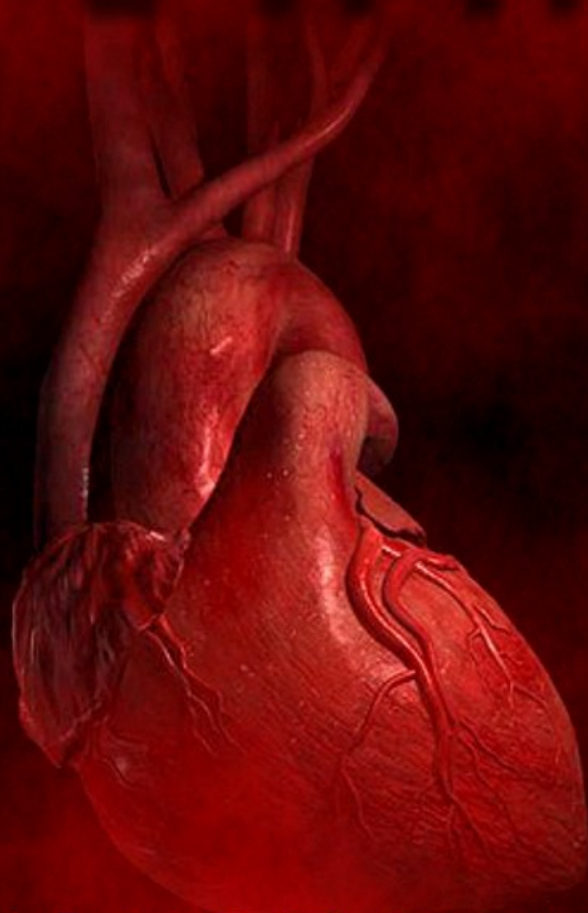
So, which side of the fence do you come down upon? Are you convinced that for a reader to be truly scared and disturbed in this cynical, doubting age, the author simply *has* to launch every last weapon in their literary arsenal at them? I don't. I still trust in the reader's imagination to do the tale justice.



Kate Monroe, Editor-in-chief - Sirens Call Publications



FEAR



ADORKABLE DESIGNS

ADORKABLEDESIGNS.NET

The Trapper Colin F. Barnes

I'm going to die here like the rest of my team. Five of us destroyed by the discovery and the weather. We were foolish to think we could do this.

Angel dragged a frostbitten foot across the Siberian tundra and hobbled westwards, waiting to die.

She clutched a rock in her right hand; its heat radiated through her thick gloves. If only she could get word out that she found it. The consequences were unimaginable.

The etchings on this meteorite weren't human, that was for certain. No human had ever touched the rock until now. But it didn't matter. *I'll be dead within the hour and all this will be for nothing. Four friends and colleagues lay frozen in the wastes, nothing more than freeze-packed carrion and I'll be next, probably eaten by wolves.*

Inexplicably, a smell carried on the frigid winds and broke the stream of unwinding death thoughts. Was it meat? Spice? Coffee? Her stomach lurched over on itself and bile rose in her throat. She salivated at the thought of food -- hot food. Her pace picked up as she narrowed in on the tempting aromas coming from beyond the white veil of snow.

Could she dare have hope? It prickled in the back of her mind, insidious, an ethereal symbiote, but she railed against it. The previous three days were enough to tell her that hope was a fool's dream. But then wasn't the existence of the discovery also a foolish dream? And yet, here it was in her hand. *No. No hope anymore.* Angel crushed the fledgling thought.

Between billowing folds of white, grey tendrils snaked in an ever-widening cone, mesmerizing, tempting. Her heart pumped harder and faint blooms of heat dared to breach the chill of her bones, hope transformed to something corporeal in spite of her.

Saline tears tracked down her face, stinging parchment skin like acid. Through the viscous filter, there, a small tent made from animal skins stood proud, defiant against the irascible conditions. She held her breath. *Was it really there? Maybe a mirage, maybe I'm dead.* She rushed forwards after stuffing the rock into a deep pocket; already she was so very protective of it. *I'm saved!*

The scream was so sudden it surprised even herself. Intense heat throbbed in powerful waves from her shin, and increased to a blinding sense of lightness. Galaxies birthed and died in her vision.

Fixed in place, her leg stuck between steel jaws of an animal trap, hot blood filled her boot. The horizon tilted and her face crashed into the tundra. A thousand white-hot needles stabbed at her skin. Angel tried to scream but the pain was too much.

The shadow of a figure approaching her was the last thing she remembered before the opaque nothingness of a black hole swallowed her.

Stomach-cramp inducing scents wafted around the small, and thankfully warm, tent. Angel wiped drool from her chin and felt her cheeks seethe with embarrassment. A small man wrapped in white and grey speckled furs sat opposite, cross-legged. He tended to a small fire. A boiling pot and a makeshift spit with chunks of meat skewered through their length hung from a delicate frame of twigs.

He pointed a gloved hand at her ankle and she looked down. He had bandaged it tightly. Just a few spots of blood soaked through. A green paste had smeared around the edges. She guessed it was some kind of natural pain control remedy, for it didn't hurt; it was just numb as though she had pins and needles.

"Thank you."

He smiled and nodded.

Angel subtly felt for her precious rock, her alien rock, and she relaxed with a long sigh after feeling its tennis ball size nestled in her coat pocket. A frisson of excitement rippled through her spine like tiny

electrical currents at the thought of surviving and showing the world her find. *Our find*, she reminded herself. She couldn't allow herself to forget her colleagues.

"Where are we?"

He smiled and nodded.

"How far to a village or town?" She did that stupid thing of talking slowly as if that magically turned English into another language.

He smiled and nodded.

Great, alive and fed, but stuck with a mute. But then it dawned on her; how did he get all the way out here in the middle of Siberia? She doubted he walked. She wanted to explore outside the tent, but when she tried to stand he grabbed her arm and passed her a skewer of meat.

It tasted good. Not just a little bit good, but real fucking good; as fine as anything as she had tasted in a restaurant in Paris or London. He managed a medium rare on the spit, and the juices were to die for.

She thanked him again, this time in Russian, it being the only Russian word she knew; her translator was one of the poor bastards to perish to the tundra shortly after extricating the rock.

Angel consumed two more pieces of meat. She couldn't quite tell what it was, but given the furs he was wearing, it was most likely wolf, or rabbit. Jenny, her daughter, would have a fit if she knew her mum had eaten a bunny.

They sat at the fire nodding and smiling, drinking and eating until it was dark. The small man yawned, blinked and waved at Angel before turning over and lying in a pouch of more furs. Angel noticed a second pouch behind her and the thought of sleep was almost irresistible. Almost. She waited until he was snoring, and as quietly as she could, stood up to a crouch and exited the tent. The bitter wind against her warmed skin felt like a punch to the face with studded knuckles. She couldn't breathe for what seemed like an eternity. Her chest tightened and her lungs refused to fill with frozen air. She missed the comfort of the tent already.

With slow, deliberate steps, Angel made her way around the tent hoping to find transport or some clue as to where this man came from. There – something under a tarpaulin. A Snowmobile. *Result.*

She removed the tarp. The engine still felt warm. Storage boxes hung from each side. Could she just get on and leave the man behind? Was his sacrifice worth it? If it meant getting the artifact back and honoring her team, then what was another death? She hated herself for thinking it, but any way she weighed it up, she came to the same conclusion: the discovery was bigger than a few people, bigger than her.

Angel checked over the controls, it reminded her of a motorcycle. Something red dripped from one of the storage boxes. She flipped the lid. A smell like an early morning butchers shop rose from the box. Packed in ice and in between blood-matted hair, a pair of clouded blue eyes, set into a grey pastiche of a face, stared up at her. *Oh my fucking god!* Her gag reflex danced the foxtrot and she heaved onto the snow.

Quick crunching footsteps from behind her froze her to the spot like a child caught stealing cookies from the cookie jar. The man spoke with a guttural set of short syllables, and when she turned, a dark grey barrel of a hunting rifle aimed at a spot between her eyes. The man simply smiled, displayed crooked black stumps for teeth and pulled the trigger.

Angel dodged to one side, but the bullet still struck her in the head, sending her sprawling over the seat of the snowmobile. She didn't feel any pain, and time became some immaterial unmoving thing. She watched with an abstracted fascination as blood dripped from her skull and splashed into growing pool on the virgin snow.

To the right of the pool, half encrusted with ice laid a severed arm, ragged at the end. The forearm

displayed several deep gashes, and Angel now realized the source of her earlier meal. Her heart beat just once more, and for a brief second wanted to cry, but she just sighed and took her last breath, her hand still on her pocket containing the artifact. The black hole of utterly nothing took her, this time she was beyond the event horizon.

The trapper pulled her body off the vehicle and the artifact fell out onto the snow. He picked it up, squinted and discarded it to the blizzard as though it was nothing more than a piece of litter. It was covered within minutes, lost to the elements again. The trapper, at least, had another meal. Some things just don't want to be found.

~

Colin F. Barnes is an author from the UK who writes Speculative and Thriller fiction. He likes to take the gritty edginess from his surroundings and personal experiences and translate them into his stories. He also edits anthologies and currently has two out: *Killing My Boss* and *City of Hell Chronicles: Volume 1*.

Like many writers, he has an insatiable appetite for reading, with his favorite authors being: Stephen King, Ray Bradbury, James Herbert, Albert Camus, H.P Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith, China Mieville and a vast array of unknown authors who he has had the privilege of beta reading for.

Website: www.colinfbarnes.com

City of Hell Chronicles: www.cityofhellchronicles.com

Killing My Boss is available on Amazon

Twitter: @ColinFBarnes



photography by irene snow



Ripping Nina D'Arcangela

Ripping – rending – tearing at me, every night...

Must it always be this, this thing over and over again? It wasn't supposed to be like this. I was a good girl; I always excelled at everything. Did I do something wrong? What made him choose *me*?

I swear to God there is no reason it should have been me; not that I wish it on some other girl, I mean, I'm not like that – that's not right, right?

Why does he have to chew so loudly? Isn't it enough that he took what he did? Isn't it enough that I have to feel it every night when he comes home? Do I really have to hear him doing it again and again? I swear I'll puke if he starts slurping! Whom I kidding, does he ever not slurp? He always fucking slurps; he rips & tears & slurps & chews! I mean seriously, fuck me!

I just wanted to see the kittens, that's all. I wanted to see their cute little faces snuggled up and making tiny little mewling sounds. That's what he said, how was I supposed to know he was a complete douche? Jay said he was cool, we'd hung with him a few times – sure, we all knew he was lying about his age, but he was so fucking hot and he could pick up beer no problem. But why didn't I just stay outside and wait for Jay like he told me to. I'm such a fucking moron.

Maybe no one will ever know; maybe no one will ever find out; maybe no one will ever be able to smell it... Why me? I'm not the one this was supposed to happen to! I'm not, god-damn it! Fuck him, fuck his stupid apartment, and fuck his blonde hair & his blue eyes. I knew better, I know I did. I just didn't think it would happen...

Ugh, chew with your mouth closed *PLEASE*!

How did I let this happen? I was just hanging out on the porch waiting for Jay when jerk-off drove up and asked if I wanted to see his kittens. Of course I wanted to see his kittens, what girl wouldn't? It was kinda weird the way he asked me to come around the back to go upstairs, but we'd hung out with him before... it seemed cool.

Ah, crap, he's friggin slurping again... dude, really?

Like I said, I'd been in his place before, Jay wasn't gonna be back for at least another half hour, so why not go see the kittens.

So I walk up the back steps with him 'cause he doesn't want to bother coming around front to let me in – yeah, I'm a friggin idiot, I know. We get up to his apartment and he's holding a bag of groceries and asks me to hold it while he opens the door...

Ohhh... come on, more chewing – doesn't this guy ever get sick of eating...

I say sure when he asks me to hold his sack (yeah, he's a real joker, this one) and he opens the door and lets me step in past him... ok, pay attention kiddies, because this is where the ride gets fun.

The door closing behind me takes place in a sane and still perfect world; but as the sound of the deadbolt being thrown begins to echo softly through the dark living room; time begins to ebb away from me in a way I've never experienced before. It slows down; not the slow of an extended moment when a bottle crashes to a tile floor; but the slow acuteness of an animals instincts kicking in and telling it something is very wrong.

As the lock is thrown, I begin to turn to him wondering 'why deadbolt the door'. In the span of two heartbeats that lasted 7, 8, maybe 9 seconds in my distorted time frame; he locks, I turn; he smiles, I drop; ...the bag hits the floor. Before the scream can escape my lips, he reaches for me and yanks me back into a cold, vise-like embrace. Something is wrong; every fiber of my being is screaming it, my brain is trying to process it. What's happening? Oh, God, I know what's happening; and that's when I heard the first crack.

It's odd, in the movies or on TV, when you see someone get their neck broken, there's always a sigh and a pregnant pause when it ends, and then the body falls to the floor – cut; that's a wrap folks; thank you very much! Well, it doesn't go down like that for me - nope!

As he snaps my neck to the side, he immediately begins to drag my body through the double doors and into his bedroom. Medically speaking, I'm not supposed to be able to feel anything at this point, right? Then again, this wasn't supposed to happen to me, remember?

All of my senses are in overdrive; I feel the fibers of the carpet scrape my bare legs; I feel the overly indulgent sheets that are too good for this piece of crap hit the side of my face as I'm tossed on the bed; I feel his disgusting fetid breath on my neck making my skin crawl – I'm vibrating with terror as he rips off my sundress with one pull from behind; I'm desperate to protect myself; desperate to get away; but I can't, my limbs won't move. My flesh responds only to his septic touch. The pain is excruciating; my broken and abused body lies there waiting for the release that only death will bring it.

...I must have passed out...

Ripping – rending – tearing – slurping; what is that noise? I can't tell – I can hear the sheets on the bed as they wrinkle; I can smell the pistachio green paint on the walls; I can taste the blood of the small man nailed to the cross that hangs above his dresser; but I don't know what that sound is! Then he grants me a view by moving so I can see him in the mirror; and what I see is him carving slices of meat off my now unfeeling back and chewing them in ecstasy while my precious blood runs over his chin and down his barely formed naked chest – the fucker was eating me! First he used my body like so much trash; then he actually started eating me!

Oh God... am I awake again?

Why am I still here? Why do I lay on this bed day after day, waiting for it to be over? Why am I not dead yet?

Dude, really, do you have to slurp when you fucking eat me?

Nina D'Arcangela was the type of girl who, when given a doll as a child, would immediately pop its head off to see what was inside, then spend countless hours contemplating how so many fantastic and fantastical things could be in her own head when the doll's was so very vacant. As a relative new comer to the writing scene, Nina is just beginning to let the world have a glimpse of not only her imagination, but darker ruminations as well.

Enamored by the classically woven tales of Edgar Allen Poe, Lovecraft, or H.G. Wells, and with landscapes dancing in her head prompted by the likes of Edgar Rice Burrows and Arthur C. Clark, magical worlds took form from their inspiration in her own head that would keep her awake night after night reading by flashlight under the covers, or nesting in a closet with the door shut so as not to awaken others by her insatiable need to read more wondrous tales. While willing to read just about anything that is well crafted, she has a soft spot for the darker side of writing in the Horror, Sci-Fi and Other World genres.

Nina can be reached through Sirens Call Publications at Nina@SirensCallPublications.com; or directly at darc.nina@gmail.com. Please visit her on her blog *Sotet Angyal: The Dark Angel* at <http://sotetangyal.wordpress.com>





CHILDHOOD NIGHTMARES

A dark, abandoned room with peeling wallpaper and a bed frame with white fabric draped over it. The room is dimly lit, with a bright light source visible through a window in the background. The walls are covered in peeling wallpaper, and the floor is covered in debris. A bed frame is in the foreground, with white fabric draped over it. The overall atmosphere is eerie and unsettling.

Under The Bed

edited by Kate Monroe

Available April 2012 - www.SirensCallPublications.com

THE BERMUDA DIMENSION

Julianne Snow

Her hand firmly grasped the skinny metal arm rest that divided her seat from the empty one next to her as her stomach lurched into her throat. Corrine hated flying and encountering turbulence was the icing on the cake tonight, especially since the plane had started to lurch and drop just as she had managed to fall asleep. That was how her luck tended to run; bad. Well, not entirely bad, just never good. It was positive that the plane was still in the air, right?

The aircraft wasn't full that night; the 'red eye' from London to Miami never was. It was a journey that Corrine was used to making. With an ailing mother in Florida and an expanding design business in the United Kingdom, it was the only way to make the commute between her birthplace and her new home.

The plane dropped suddenly causing Corrine to slam down hard in her seat. It was bound to be a rough night and her backside was going to take a beating. Studying the occupied seats in front of her, Corrine noticed that many of the other passengers had similar holds on their respective arm rests. While she couldn't see their faces, she was certain that all of them wore the same concerned look that possessed hers.

A single ding sounded, announcing the Captain. "Good evening passengers, I apologize if I woke you. We are currently experiencing a disturbance in the surrounding atmosphere due to a storm cell due west of us. The turbulence we are experiencing is a direct result of that. We're going to increase our altitude in an attempt to pull out of this choppy air. For your safety, I've turned on the seatbelt sign; please remain in your seat with your seatbelt fastened until I advise you otherwise. We are currently on course to land in Miami at 7:42AM Eastern Standard

Time as scheduled. Thank you."

For some reason, Corrine thought he sounded a little too chipper for the middle of the night and for the fact that the plane seemed to drop at least ten feet every minute or so. She knew that turbulence could happen at any point while in the air but that didn't mean that she had to like it. The next drop was too much for the pins in her hair and as the thick auburn curls tumbled to her shoulders, she felt someone's eyes on her. Brushing an errant lock off of her forehead, she turned her head to the left, seeking the heat from the intense stare.

A diminutive old woman was studying her intently, her hands clasped calmly in her lap. "It's not as bad as you think, dear," she said. "I've been through much worse. I've taken this journey for the past forty-six years and each year, it gets a little more exciting. Turbulence is the least of your worries tonight."

"I understand the reasoning behind turbulence; I would just prefer that it not rearrange my internal organs." Corrine smiled at the old woman after commenting and was rewarded with a conspiratorial smirk from across the aisle. There was something in the woman's face that made her pause; akin to recognition, but not quite there. Corrine couldn't place where she may have known her from. The airplane dropped again and she was surprised to see the woman seemingly float along with it. The older woman hadn't even braced herself at all as the plane cavorted among the air currents. Odd. Another ding announcing the Captain sounded. "Good evening. I apologize for disturbing you once again but the storm cell to the west of us has moved; it's now directly between us and Miami and we are closing in on it quickly. In an effort to bypass the storm, we are going to redirect

our course slightly and attempt to skirt around it. Unfortunately that will delay us from landing in Miami as scheduled. I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. Thank you."

Corrine glanced at her watch. 11:17 AM; that meant it was 6:17 AM Eastern Standard Time. They should have been landing in about an hour and a half. Trying not to be irritated at the change in her schedule, she glanced at the woman to her left and noticed that she'd actually fallen asleep. As she wondered how far this new route would take them off course, she was rewarded with another spanking as the aircraft dropped again.

"How can she possibly sleep through this punishment?" Corrine wondered aloud under her breath. It was strange that this older woman was so unaffected by the turbulence. How was it possible that she was able to sit there as the plane continued to lurch and drop and not show even the slightest of reactions to it? It didn't make sense; especially now that the woman seemed to be able to sleep through the worst of it.

Sleep was the farthest thing from Corrine's mind at the moment. The turbulence had gotten so bad that she was sure the wings were going to be torn off. How could such a huge airplane take such a brutal beating and still manage to stay in the air? It likely had to do with the fact they were going so fast, but the fear that something horrible could result remained near the forefront of her mind. As she studied the checked upholstery of the seat in front of her, Corrine couldn't help but overhear the conversation occurring in the vicinity somewhere behind her. Two women were talking in hushed whispers, their voices oddly familiar as they attempted to keep quiet. In the relative silence of the plane's interior however,

their conversation sounded loud. Their words made no sense to Corrine.

"I swear that tonight is going to be the night, it's just like it was for me twenty-three years ago," one of the voices whispered. "The conditions were similar to these seven years ago as well. Maybe tonight is my night; it is for one of us at least," the second voice responded in hushed tones. "Remember the trip two years ago? They were both lucky that night." And then as an afterthought, "I do feel sorry for her, though, but you know the rules as well as I do. Do you remember what happened when 2006 tried to warn 2009? No one got to go home that year."

Corrine strained to look behind her whilst trying to maintain the death grasp she had on her seat. She could only see a portion of one of their faces between the adjoining seats of the three rows that separated them. Something was strikingly familiar about the facial features that she could see. With the familiarity of the voice and now the face, Corrine wondered if she knew the woman. She hadn't paid much attention to any of the other passengers in the terminal or bothered to scan any faces as she boarded. It was her tendency to attempt to blend into the background if at all possible and developing an obsession for staring didn't allow one to do that. Besides, she'd been more interested in observing the new lounge that had recently opened in the terminal; comparing her work with that of the other designer and deciding what she would have done better if she'd had the contract.

Her curiosity spiked. She risked letting go of her arm rest so that she could lean into the aisle as she looked backward. Just as she was about to get a better look at the face that was such an enigma to her at the moment, the plane dropped. Since

she was already off-kilter, the sudden loss of contact with her seat threw her against the arm rest and tipped her partway into the aisle. Corrine fought against the momentum of the fall, knowing that she'd have a dark bruise on her left side to remind her that curiosity wasn't always favorably rewarded. Managing to claw and fight her way back into her seat, she gave up trying to place the woman seated behind her. It wasn't worth the additional beating to her body. Their voices grabbed her attention as they floated up to her again. "It will only be a few more minutes and then we'll know for sure. I'm so nervous though. I've never felt like this before. I'm going to admit that I don't want to read too much into it but I desperately want it to be me. I know we all do, but I miss my family so much and I've only been gone for seven years. Maybe they haven't forgotten me yet." Corrine could just barely make out the subtle clues in her whispered cadence and tone that told her that tears had accompanied the fervent plea. Her mind began to wonder what the woman could possibly be talking about. Whatever she was hoping would happen appeared to be desperately important to her. Corrine's mind settled on a reunion of some kind as the likely culprit for the nervousness and the tears. Her mind filled in the blanks with a story she'd recently heard on the news about a missing person that had been located after a long number of years. That was probably the reason the woman had looked so familiar as well. With everything making some semblance of sense again, Corrine turned her attention to the tasks she needed to accomplish whilst in Miami. As she was thinking about what to do with her elderly mother, Corrine started to feel odd. She had a tingling sensation which started in her toes and surged through her

body within the smallest fraction of a second. It wasn't an unpleasant feeling but after it was over, something just didn't feel right. As she stared at the back of her hand where it firmly grasped the arm rest, she began to notice each strained tendon and plumped vein. She tried to lessen the hold she had on the metal but her mind couldn't get the command communicated to the muscles of her hand. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't let go. As the panic started to set in, she looked to her left, thinking to ask the older woman for some assistance. She was gone.

The older woman must have gotten up to use the washroom. Corrine thought it was crazy for the woman to have tried to navigate to the washroom during such extreme turbulence but sometimes when you've got to go, you've just got to go. Inwardly chuckling at her own little joke helped to calm her down and as the panic of the previous moment subsided, she discovered that she could unclench her fingers from the arm rest.

Not that she needed to hold on anymore; as quickly as the turbulence had come, it dissipated. As the plane glided smoothly through the air, Corrine began to relax. Everything was going to be okay; she was going to make it to Miami in one piece. The ding sounded, followed by a new voice; no British accent and younger in tone, probably that of the co-pilot. "Good morning. We will be landing in Miami shortly. I apologize for the delay but we had to redirect around that storm. Please begin to collect your belongings and thank you for flying British United." British United? What? Corrine's mind furiously tried to work that one out as she transferred her belongings from the pouch on the back of the seat in front of her to her purse. Was she so tired that she had

actually forgotten what airline she'd flown in on? Normally she always flew British Airways and for some reason, she couldn't even recall an airline called British United. Her fatigue must be playing havoc with her mind; that was the only explanation. However, as she looked around the plane she began to notice subtle differences. Her seat was in a row of three instead of two and the upholstery that she had studied only hours before was a different pattern and palette of colors. Perhaps she had actually fallen asleep and her mind had planted her in a bizarre dream.

As the airplane made its descent into Miami's airport, Corrine tried to separate dream from reality. Not getting very far she gave up, hoping that at some point it would all make sense. She looked to her left, hoping to find the old woman calmly seated there, thinking that it might make her feel less of out sorts. She wasn't back yet, and in her confusion she wondered if she'd ever been seated there at all.

Once the aircraft had landed safely and was against the skyway, all of the passengers started to quietly disembark. Corrine gathered her belongings and stood to exit the passenger compartment, searching for the old woman. As she stared at the seat the old woman had occupied, she noticed that the seatbelt was fastened and thought that was odd. Trying to reason that tidbit out, she left the plane with the rest of the passengers, noting for the first time that most of them were female. All striking familiar; similar, even.

From the skyway behind her, she clearly heard a voice call out "I'm sorry, Corrine, but we're not allowed to warn the next one. Those are the rules." She turned to look behind her but all of the women had chosen that exact moment to either look down or away from her glance. Not

understanding the comment in the slightest, Corrine pinched herself in an attempt to determine if she was in fact awake. The pain in her forearm was as good of an answer as she was going to get. Coupled with the pain in her left side and the tenderness she could feel in her buttocks as she walked, Corrine decided there was no way that she could have dreamt it all.

As she walked through the terminal on her way to Customs, she felt the eyes of the rest of the passengers on her. They fell into step behind her as she led the way down the concourse. Upon reaching Customs, she noted the area was awfully quiet; likely because her fellow passengers were all behind her. It was early in the morning and it was entirely possible that they were the only international flight to have recently landed.

Stepping up to the desk, she presented her passport to the middle-aged gentleman whose nametag announced that he was Harry. He took the document and placed it under a device that she had never seen before. Thinking it must be some new measure in airport security, she smiled pleasantly at him.

Harry looked up at Corrine and then back to her passport. He flipped through a few pages, obviously looking for something. Not finding it, whatever it was, he picked up his phone and dialed a number.

"Sir, we have another one," he said, causing Corrine's face to wrinkle in confusion and a small degree of fear. Harry spoke again. "Yes, of course, Sir, I'll keep her here until you come." With that he disconnected the call as his attention turned back to Corrine. "Ma'am, if you wouldn't mind waiting over there for a moment? My colleague Mr. Maxwell will be right with you."

"I don't understand. Is there something

wrong with my passport? I was just in Miami last month and there was no issue then," she offered in way of explanation. "You'll understand in a moment, Ma'am. Please allow Mr. Maxwell to explain everything. I'm sorry I can't be of more help to you," he returned, the look on his face relaying genuine concern and something that Corrine read as pity. As Corrine moved to the side, she glanced to the group of women that had gathered behind her. Recognition dawned on her in that moment; she was staring into her own face when she looked at each one of them, just at different stages of aging. A door opened and a man of about her own age exited, making a beeline for her. He offered his hand, introducing himself as James Maxwell. Corrine took the outstretched hand and shook it mechanically, her mind trying to fit the pieces of the puzzle together. Nothing was making any sense and she was now sure that she was dreaming. It was the only explanation for such strange events.

"Ma'am, I work for the Department of Displaced Persons. I understand that you just came in from London, is that correct?" he calmly asked her.

"Yes. I'm here to see my mother. She's not well. I've been living in London for the past three years. I have a business there. Design, interior design," Corrine disjointedly answered, offering more information than what was needed.

"Let's go to my office where we can talk more comfortably," he soothingly offered as he held open the door he had just come through. Corrine allowed herself to be ushered through the doorway, not noticing the looks that passed between Maxwell and the group of women. As she followed him down the hallway, her mind attempted to connect the fragmented information in her head. Once in his office, he offered her a comfortable-looking chair in front of his large desk.

Taking the seat behind it, he studied her for a moment before asking, "Have you ever heard of the Bermuda Triangle?"

As the only girl growing up in a family with four children in the Canadian countryside, **Julianne Snow** needed some form of escape. Her choice was the imaginations of others which only fostered the vibrancy of her own. A voracious reader by the age of 7, she tackled the classics along with many others. She devoured King, Koontz, Christopher Pike, Robin Cook, and Marion Zimmer Bradley along with many more.

Her literary loves have expanded to include the works of Ariana Franklin, James Rollins, Gregoire Maguire, Jonathan Mayberry, Jeffrey Deaver, Diana Gabaldon, and Kathy Reichs along with the myriad of talented independently published authors she has discovered and in some cases, befriended.

The horror and forensic/crime thriller genres top her list of favorites, but she can never turn down a good science fiction, fantasy or mystery read. Julianne's first full-length foray into the publishing realm is due out February 2012 and follows a group of friends as they attempt to survive their *Days with the Undead*. She also appears in the *Women of the Living Dead Anthology*.

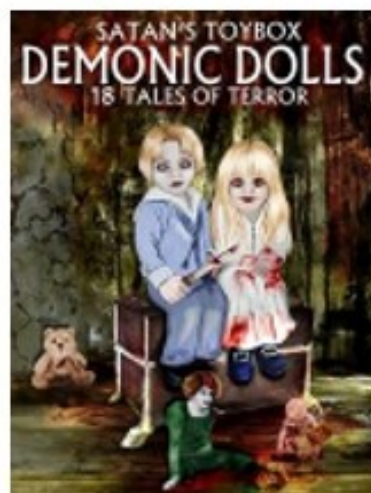
Connect with Julianne on Twitter at @CdnZmbiRytr, on Facebook at Julianne Snow, or at one of her two blogs – dayswiththeundead.com and theflipsideofjulianne.wordpress.com.

KATE MONROE

The red-headed and eclectic author of 'Playing With Fire' and 'Kiss Of An Angel' has tastes ranging from classical horror to erotica, taking in a flirtation with historical romance along the way. With short horror stories published through Angelic Knight Press and the upcoming anthologies of Cruentus Libri Press and Knightwatch Press, there's sure to be something in her arsenal to tempt you...



Satan's Toybox: Demonic Dolls



Remember when you got your first doll, that loveable companion who saw you through the best and worst of days? Remember when Barbie was the doll version of who you wanted to be when you grew up? Be careful what you wish for...

AVAILABLE THROUGH
AMAZON AND SMASHWORDS

And coming Summer 2012...

The Falcon's Chase

Captain Reuben Costello is mere hours away from execution when the most unlikely of rescuers storms into his cell. Arianne Dalton needs the assistance of the infamous Black Swan to flee England. He finds himself more than willing to help the fiercely independent Ari in exchange for his freedom. However, when they come to find their fates inextricably tangled in a plot that threatens the very foundations of British society, they are swept away on a chase that puts not only their lives, but their hearts at risk - and neither of them can defy the wild and stormy ride they find upon the Falcon...

The adventure-packed Steampunk Romance will be released through Sirens Call Publications

www.sirensallpublications.com

The Propagation Robert Ropars

Christine awoke quickly from a deep dream and sat up in bed. Still half asleep, it took her a few moments to realize that her right hand was gripping her left arm. She let go and got up to close her bedroom window. A nice breeze had kept her cool during the night, but the pre-dawn air was far too cold at the moment.

She lazily shuffled over to the window and shut it. Pain in her left arm erupted and she gripped it again. The pain was mixed with an irritating, burning and itching sensation. Christine gazed out the window while scratching her left forearm. As the irritation continued, she decided to take a closer look and turned on a lamp sitting on a small table by the window. Focusing now, she saw a swollen dark wound at the bend in her arm. It was obvious something had bitten her and probing the sore with a finger, she found that it was hot to the touch.

The wound started oozing a dark fluid and the itching became incessant. Carefully, she scratched, trying not to open it further. A wave of nausea suddenly swept through her, and as she stared, the skin split and thick, dark, bloody pus oozed out.

"Oh, my God!" Christine gasped in horror. Before she could do anything else, she felt and saw something moving under the skin. She screamed, but remained unable to tear her eyes away from the pulsating wound. A hairy leg slowly appeared, tearing the flesh further apart as a black creature started to emerge. Dark eyes stared up at Christine and she screamed again.

"Christine, what is it?" Her husband, who had apparently fallen asleep in his study while working late, rushed into the master bedroom hearing her screams. She held her left arm out for him to see and he came over and gripped her arm by the wrist.

"What the hell is that?"

As he stared transfixed in horror, a large, hairy black spider pulled itself free from her arm. Its body was about half the size of his

palm and was the largest spider either had ever seen. Blood and pus poured from the grievous wound onto the white carpet at their feet unnoticed, focused as they were on the spider. Fully emerged, the spider leapt from her arm to the floor. As they watched it ran under the bed.

"James!"

Christine, who had gone ghostly white, lost her balance and he helped her lie on the carpet.

"Christine!"

James watched in horror as her skin pulsed at points all over her body. Christine writhed and screamed as large wounds opened and more spiders appeared. She began to convulse violently as spiders streamed out of her. He stood up and, covering his mouth, backed away a few steps. Christine began to gag as her throat suddenly swelled and a lump moved upward into her mouth. The spider that came forth was different than the others and sat on her tongue partially shielded by her teeth. White in color, it was larger and it paused on her chin to clean the bile, blood and pus covering its hairy limbs.

The other spiders, having ripped free of her body, were scrambling for various dark places around the room. This spider however finished cleaning itself and seemed to suddenly notice James and hunkered down. James backed up a step, startled by the sudden focus on him.

"Shit!"

Turning, James started to run for the doorway. He heard a thud behind him as the giant spider raced after him. As he exited onto the landing approaching the stairwell, he heard a screech behind him and felt something hit his leg. A searing pain erupted in his right ankle and he immediately lost strength and fell face first on the carpet. The friction burnt his chin and hands.

Spinning over on his back, he tried to stand and realizing he couldn't, he started to scoot himself backwards. He saw the white spider nearby watching him intently with its eight

malicious eyes. It hunkered again and suddenly raced forward. Reaching his right leg it ran up his pajama bottom. He sat forward, desperately flailing as he tried to crush it. Sudden pain exploded in his groin, sending him falling back screaming. His hands fought against the lump between his legs as the couple's servants raced up the stairs. They stopped in shock as they reached the landing and saw their master beating at his crotch. A large bloodstain had appeared and was starting to spread onto the carpet.

He shook violently, screaming as the spider forced a stinger on its abdomen deep into his scrotum and injected hundreds of eggs. In the warm bloody environment they would grow quickly and soon be ready to hatch. The servants rushed to his side. One of the maids saw the mistress on the floor in the bedroom and screamed.

Her scream continued as hundreds of large black spiders flowed from under the master bedroom furniture. The smell of the servants had aroused insatiable hunger in the arachnid horde. They stared unmoving and then started to chatter. The clicking of their fangs was audible even at a distance. The maid backed up slowly and tripped over her unconscious master's feet.

Falling on her back, her eyes widened as

she saw the mass of giant spiders racing towards the doorway. She stumbled backwards and the other servants leaned forward to help her and then turned and ran in panic. Spiders spilled from the room and began to cover and bite the maid who fell back, shaking violently as white foam appeared between her lips.

The rest of the spiders sped up the walls, down the stairwell or dropped by webbing from the railing. The three surviving servants screamed and crashed into each other as giant black spiders rained down on them with their paralyzing bites. It wasn't long before some of them were wrapped in webbing securing them to the spots where they fell. Massive injections of the vicious venom began to liquefy their innards, as they lay unconscious.

A short time later, the spiders and more of their newly hatched brethren were feeding, greedily sucking up liquid organs and muscles. Some servants were left alive, paralyzed and only partially unwrapped so the queen could lay more of her eggs. The horde would need to find more food soon for their quickly growing family. It was only a matter of time before they found the pet door leading out from the kitchen to the backyard.

Robert Ropars is a horror author living in the Chicago suburbs. He has been writing since he first could and loves reading, photography, outdoors/hiking, and is an avid movie fan of all genres. He has a lifelong love for horror and sci-fi/fantasy and is excited to be part of the creative side of this world so that he can share his macabre thoughts with his fans. He is highly active on Twitter and loves to connect with horror genre lovers. Robert is looking forward to seeing movie adaptations of his writing and connecting with an even larger audience into blood and gore.

You can find his books, including *Dark Bites: Four Tales of Horror* and *Dead Woman's Curve* on Amazon.

If you want to connect with Robert, you can find him on Twitter at @RobertRopars or via email at robropars@gmail.com

What The Dark Brings Edward Lorn

Chaz Franklin was the first one to respond to the scene. The detective had to follow the caretaker of the building—Mr. Simms—down a series of stair cases to actually find where the child had been secreted away. The damp, unpleasant smell of the basement knocked Chaz for a loop. He could pinpoint many different smells - mold, dead animals, feces - but a lot of the aromas eluded his deductive measures.

Once in the basement at the bottom of the last stair, Mr. Simms pulled his Maglight from his belt illuminating the long hallway. Rusted piping ran along the walls on either side. Mr. Simms shuffled forward and Chaz followed.

The two men walked through a door-less concrete archway with remnants of wood clinging to the broken hinges on the right side of the jamb. Chaz stepped inside as Mr. Simms moved off against one wall. He slid across it as he aimed the flashlight at the child like a gun.

The beam of the Mag made no difference. Six floodlights encircled the boy, each one set up on its own tripod with a halogen lamp at the top.

The heavy drumming of the gasoline powered generator filled the space. Chaz surveyed the scene and found the boy sitting Indian style in the middle of the halo. Fresh crimson coagulated in the corners of his mouth; dried blood flaking from his chin. He didn't look malnourished, in fact, he looked stuffed. His large gut covered his genitals. Chaz noticed it was hard for the child to breathe because of his swollen second chin. The boy's breasts rose sharply but deflated slowly.

"He was three times as big last week," Mr. Simms said over the rhythmic thumping of the generator. "I figured it'd be best to bring the floodlights in before calling you guys."

Chaz snapped his head towards the old man, "You did this?"

"Well course, I did."

Chaz could tell there was nothing cold or evil in his eyes. Mr. Simms actually thought he'd been doing something good.

"The thing's not right, I tell ya."

Chaz pulled his revolver from his shoulder holster and aimed it at the old man. "Up against the wall."

The generator spit and sputtered and the lights dimmed for a brief second.

"Whatcha pointin' that thing at me for, Mister? I ain't the problem."

The generator chugged roughly, shaking in its casing.

"Turn around and put your hands on the wall. Now!" Chaz cocked the hammer.

"Damnit, I forgot the gas." Mr. Simms said with a shake of his head.

"I said turn around and put your hands on the wall!"

Blood was thumping in Chaz's head so hard he could barely think.

"These lights go out, Mister, and we gonna..."

"Now!"

Chaz moved cautiously toward the old man as he pulled his cuffs from his back pocket.

"Please, Mister..." Simms said as he turned and faced the wall. "We needta-"

"I suggest you shut up, Simms. Put your hands behind your back."

One hand at a time, Chaz clicked the cuffs into place. He removed the flashlight from the old man's hand. Flicking the switch off, Chaz stuck it in his back pocket. The generator coughed one last time.

"I'm beggin' you Mister..."

The lights dimmed and blinked out. From the middle of the room, a guttural growl began to grow. The noise increased in volume and pitch until it was a deafening squeal.

"Now see what you went and did," Mr. Simms sighed.

"What the hell is that?!" Chaz yelled over the cacophony of sounds banging off the walls of the basement room.

Chaz felt something grab his right leg, tight and strong. Suddenly, he was yanked backwards, dropping the revolver as he fell. His chin split open as it met the concrete floor. Chaz tasted blood; he'd bitten his tongue. Before he even realized that he was on the ground he was being dragged to the center of the room.

"Damnit all to hell," Mr. Simms said.

Chaz felt something touching his rear end. Mr. Simms bent down to take the flashlight from Chaz's back pocket.

"Gotta show you what I mean, I guess."

Chaz was able to roll onto his back just as the room brightened. He saw Mr. Simms with his hands locked behind him, pointing the flashlight.

"What the hell!"

In the briefest instant, by the beam of the flashlight, Chaz saw the little fat boy sitting Indian style just as he had when they first arrived. The boy's mouth was agape. A purple tendril covered in mucus with raised veins extended from his throat. It was wrapped around Chaz's ankle so tight that he could not feel his foot. The boy's oral cavity had elongated and his jaw was unhinged.

Suddenly, the tendril retreated back down the boy's throat like a measuring tape being recoiled into its casing. The boy's jaw realigned with a sickening cracking sound.

Then, he was just a filthy little boy sitting in the middle of the room again.

The boy's face read, "Nothing out of the ordinary here...nothing at all."

Frowning, he spoke...

"I'm still hungry."

Edward Lorn is an American horror author presently residing somewhere in the southeast United States. He enjoys storytelling, reading, and writing biographies in the third person. Be on the lookout for his first novel, *Bay's End*, coming February 2012.

Connect with Edward on:

Facebook: Edward Lorn

Twitter: @EdwardLorn

Blog: edwardlorn.wordpress.com

DAYS WITH THE UNDEAD: BOOK ONE

Coming in late February 2012



DAYS WITH THE UNDEAD: BOOK ONE

Julianne Snow

www.sirensca11publications.com

Now, I don't know why he didn't use the radio strapped to his shoulder to call for back-up. He just stood there staring at us as if in disbelief of whom he had encountered and what he had been told. Perhaps he still viewed the situation as something that could potentially be viewed as terrorism or worse. You could see the wheels turning in his head; trying to figure out how he was going to get us to surrender when he was clearly outnumbered.

Seconds seemed like hours. He could open fire at any time and wound or kill any one of us. No words passed between us. The silence was deafening. Until...

It came out of the darkness. There was no betraying scent to give it away. Just the soft whisper of its feet on the ground. And then the blood-curdling screams of the deputy and the panicked shot that barely missed the truck. We heard a thump against the bumper and knew it was time to leave.

Slimy, putrefying hands snaked into the open window almost laying purchase to Max as he turned the truck back on. The surprise of the moment threw all of us off for a second but quickly the handguns and windows all came up. We could still hear the dying screams of the deputy in the still of the night through the closed windows.

With the windows up, we felt a small bit safer. Soon the hands started to smack against the glass of the windows. The noise was unnerving and the slimy hand prints left behind a reminder of what we didn't want touching us. Our headlights grew dark as they closed in on us in the idling truck.

Shades of Grey Kate Monroe

She turned the battered locket between her fingers as she cast an appraising stare over its clumsy markings. She had found it amongst her grandmother's possessions. It had been wrapped inside a note, but the paper was so aged and fragile that whatever had once been written there was now indecipherable.

Eden Alexander had been so convinced that she knew everything there was to know about her grandmother, but since the elderly lady had passed away just over a month ago, it had been as if she had unraveled a tangled web of deceit; each box of possessions that she unpacked seemed to reveal yet another fact that she had not known about the woman she had so adored.

This locket had been found at the bottom of one of the last boxes that her brother had carried down from the attic to be sorted through before he had departed to leave Eden to complete the task alone. It had been buried underneath a lovingly folded collection of burlesque costumes – yet another secret that her grandmother had kept. Beneath the ornate and provocative costumes was a tattered and yellowing old diary and thrust into its centre was the locket, wrapped up inside the note.

Eden held the locket up to the fading light of the amber sunset. Its rays filled every corner of the old-fashioned and prim bedroom as she frowned and bit down upon her lower lip. There was something strangely entrancing about the gold locket, despite its battered appearance; it very clearly possessed a great age. Eden was consumed by the irresistible urge to fasten it around her neck.

Her long fingers fumbled over the stiff clasp, but finally she succeeded. She shook out her dark curls and rose from the bed where she had been seated cross-legged with the contents of the box strewn on top of the bedspread around her.

Eden paused only to impulsively pick up the diary before she wandered over to the dust-covered mirror that sat on her grandmother's beautifully carved dressing table. With a heavy sigh, she straddled the stool in front of it and leaned forwards to wipe the worst of the dust away.

The locket had nestled itself into the curve of her cleavage, the metal unnaturally cold against her skin. She glanced down uneasily as she touched it again; convinced, for just a moment, that she had felt it faintly pulsing. It stayed still under her hand, though, and Eden supposed that it must have simply been the racing of her heart that she had felt.

A sudden gust of wind through the open window wrenched away her attention, for it had blown open the diary where it lay in front of her. An irrational feeling of unease built inside her as she fingered the musty pages and flicked through them as her eyes darted across the page. Seeing nothing of interest, she closed it again with another low and miserable sigh.

She shivered as the chilled air flooded into the little room. Eden made to rise from the stool and shut the window, but before she could do so the locket twitched again; this time, there could be no doubt about it, for she had seen the movement in the hazy reflection.

Unable to stifle a gasp of fear, she frantically tried to wrench the locket free of her neck, but the delicate chain that it hung around proved surprisingly sturdy. It refused to give way.

The locket was still gently twitching against her breasts, almost as if it was impatient for something. Blood rushed through her veins and brought a stinging flush to her skin as her head rolled to the side.

Eden ceased trying to break the clasp and instead, of their own accord, her fingers moved to caress the locket and try to push it open. The cold metal was stiff and unyielding. The locket seemed to have become stuck shut over time, but she could not stop her fingers from desperately working at it and trying with all their might to force the two halves apart. Finally, it gave way and sprung open to fall back against her chest.

The locket was empty. Eden slumped down into the stool with a burst of disappointment and gave an ashaky laugh, unsure what it was that she had even expected to find. Clearly, her mind, strained by the

loss of her beloved grandmother, had allowed her vivid imagination to run away with itself. She reached up to wipe away the solitary tear that had been clinging to her eyelashes, but as she did so, she realized that something was very wrong.

The colors in the room were fading away. All that was left were shades of grey; the only things in the room with any color remaining were Eden herself and the golden locket. Even the clothes that she wore were paling in front of her, the red shirt already dulled and lacking entirely in color. She blinked her eyes and rubbed them hard in case it was some strange trick of the light; but when she warily re-opened them, it was still the same.

Eden stared at the reflection of her terrified face, her blue eyes round and wide with fear. Nothing seemed out of place in the room that was reflected behind her – nothing out of the ordinary at all, nothing but the utter lack of any color or life.

The reflection she saw told her very clearly that nobody was in the room with her. She was entirely alone in the colorless room– so why was it that she could now feel a pair of arms snaking possessively around her waist, embracing her and drawing her back into the heat of another body?

Still the reflection showed that nobody was with her, but Eden could feel her hair being gently pulled away from her neck and the warm breath of another person against the now exposed skin of her throat.

“Ah, Eden, finally we meet!” a soft voice murmured into her ear, so tender and loving that Eden sighed despite her fear. “Won’t you turn around, darling, so that you can see my face?”

Her breath caught in her throat and her heart was thumping wildly out of time. Eden could again do nothing to prevent her body from moving as if it were out of her control. It twisted gracefully on the stool to turn her away from the mirror and its insistence that the voice she heard could not possibly exist. Her eyes were tightly closed, but it did not stop her from feeling the arm that was still around her waist, nor the hand that was reaching up to caress her face.

“Eden Rose Alexander, open your eyes.” Eden’s eyes opened in disregard of the effort she was putting into keeping them shut to guard her from what was in front of her. She was now staring into the face of the man who had spoken to her and found herself wholly unable to look away from him or even blink.

The man – she called him a man, for that was what he seemed to be, but every one of her senses was screaming out a warning that this apparition could be no man – the man was sinfully beautiful. His pale, almost ethereal skin was stretched tightly across the perfectly carved features of his face, and his hair was blond, falling with a casual elegance; but it was his eyes that entranced her entirely. They were filled with such a desperate, aching hunger, but as she stared into them uncertainly, Eden became convinced that she could see the very fires of Hell itself smoldering in their depths. Her tongue darted out to moisten her suddenly dry lips. “W-who are you?”

“Oh, Eden, my Eden, there is such power in a name!” he crooned as his fingers traced out the contours of her face and wiped away the tears that still nestled in the corners of her eyes. “I made that mistake once with your grandmother, darling, but I shall not make it again; not now that I have finally been released and not now that I possess a beauty such as you for my own.”

“My grandmother? I – I don’t understand –”

“And how could you? You are still a mere mortal, after all, but perhaps I shall indulge you with an explanation, darling – the whole of the eternity awaits us, so there is no need to rush. Your grandmother, Eden Rose Alexander, was a sinful and wicked young woman.”

Eden opened her mouth to indignantly defend her grandmother, but the man raised one finger to press against her lips and silence her protest before it could begin.

“She *was*, Eden. You did not know her then, but I did; oh, how well I knew her! Lily Malone, as I knew her, was consumed by the carnal sins of lust and greed. She was more than willing to give up anything

and everything in her pursuit of pleasure. Your grandmother, Eden, intended to sell her soul to the devil."

Were it not for everything else that was happening, Eden would have dismissed the man's words as an absurd, impossible notion, but there was such sincerity in his beautiful face that she could not help but consider what he said. "But how – how do you know...no, it cannot be true!" She shook her head as the man took hold of it with both his hands to possessively twist it back towards his.

"I was there with her. Oh, Eden, in her heyday Lily was just as beautiful as you are now!" His forceful words were fiery and passionate. They echoed inside her head as he laid a tender kiss on her forehead that seared and burned her skin and drew a low moan of pain from her lips as he continued.

"I adored her completely, encouraged her in all that she did – she was my lover. I trusted her with everything, and she...she betrayed me!" His face suddenly contorted with terrible, bitter anger. "She became afraid, she lost her trust in me and then she betrayed me in the worst of ways."

"How?" Eden leaned forwards as her head rolled from side to side. She became dizzy and light-headed as his grip on her face tightened. Her breath was coming in short, panting gasps; none of that mattered, though, for all she could now think of was him and the words he was speaking.

"She reneged on our agreement before it could be completed and instead, she sacrificed me, Eden! She confined me to a locket, the very locket that now adorns your body, darling – I was trapped and helpless, unable to do anything but watch as she sought absolution for her sins, trying so hard to live a faultless life as if her newfound piety could win her forgiveness!" He was clearly enraged, for his pale skin had reddened and his entire body now seemed to burn with his anger, heat emanating from him in tangible waves.

"My grandmother was a good woman!" Eden was still unable to even attempt to move back from him, despite her wavering words.

"She was an excellent actress, my Eden," he corrected her with a snarl. Their faces were now just inches apart. "Believe me, for I knew her far better than you ever did; not only was I with her during those gloriously debauched days of her youth, but I was forced to mutely observe every day of her life; I watched, and I waited."

"For what? Whatever you waited for, it is too late – my grandmother is dead!"

"Yes, she is, but my lust for Lily was extinguished when she betrayed me! I waited to take my revenge upon her, my fury intensifying with every moment I remained trapped, but many months ago now, my focus changed. Eden, darling, it is you that I have been waiting for, you that I have been yearning for!" He wound his hands through her tousled hair and stared intently into her eyes.

"Me?!" A low, disbelieving sob flew free from her parted lips.

"Yes, you; my beautiful darling! There was so little I could do trapped in my locket, but with the little power I had remaining I made it impossible for Lily to dispose of the locket. She tried to share the secret of my confinement in that little note that I was wrapped in, but the power I retained was sufficient to wipe it clean. And then, finally, she died, and you came to me! Don't you see, Eden, that this was meant to be?! You were always intended to be mine; you released me from my confinement, and now, with you at my side, I shall rise again - greater and more terrible than ever before!"

He rose to his feet and pulled her with him in to draw her up against his chest. The intimate touch filled Eden with a sinful rush of consuming lust. She arched her back with a low moan and stared up at him in wonder. "What are you?"

"What am I? I am your lord and master, Eden, and I will be your lover! Oh, how wonderfully apt it is that Eden is your name, darling – paradise is what is denied to me, yet it is Eden that I shall have in my arms for all eternity!" he said triumphantly.

As he swelled with pride, the illusion he had presented flickered; just for the briefest of moments, but

in that moment Eden saw his true form. His skin burned crimson red and curved ebony horns protruded sharply from either side of his head. Only his eyes remained the same, the fires smoldering within their depths more intense than ever before.

A desperate, unearthly scream rose up from Eden's throat as she began to writhe in his arms, doing all that she could to break free. She managed to twist around to face the mirror once more, but his arms tightened around her again as his loud roar of fury filled the room. "You are mine, Eden! You are in my realm, now; you are mine, I say, and I will not be defied again!"

Eden shook her head and thrashed back against him before they froze as one as another blast of wind suddenly rushed into the room, directed upon the diary that still lay on the dressing table in front of her. The pages whipped in the air then fell open as a single word blazed in fire across the middle of them, burning brightly and ferociously.

One word.

The man's cryptic words made sudden sense as he howled with fear and spun her away to sweep her off her feet and away from the diary, but too late. Eden had seen the word, and she knew what to do.

"Basileus!" she screamed and thus named the demon that held her. "Basileus, I name you and I confine you to this locket, the locket that held you for so many years and will now hold you again!"

As she snatched up the locket and held it up into the air, not even flinching despite the way that it burned so painfully against the skin of her hand, Basileus stumbled backwards, clutching at his chest and screaming in terror. His form faded away rapidly, losing solidity and becoming nothing but vapor as he stretched out towards her in supplication.

The fire in his eyes was the very last thing to disappear before the vapor was sucked into the locket and it slammed shut. The metal fell back onto Eden's breasts as the color and life flooded back into the room and she slumped against the foot of the bed.

As she shakily reached up to touch the reddened mark on her forehead, the place where Basileus's lips had kissed her skin still burning, the faintest of scents began to fill the room. Comforting and achingly familiar, she recognized it instantly as the perfume that her grandmother had always worn.

Tears clouded her vision. She closed her eyes as she felt the tenderest of kisses against her forehead that took the pain away completely before the scent slowly faded again to leave Eden entirely alone once more.

Still, though, the image of the demon's face and the passion in his voice was consuming her. Barely able to comprehend all that had just happened, Eden did not even realize that as the sun disappeared beyond the horizon to bathe the little bedroom in darkness, her hand reached for the locket that hung around her neck.

She caressed it with a lover's touch and, of their own accord once more, her fingers moved towards the clasp that held it closed - the clasp that was the only thing keeping the demon from her side...

Kate Monroe is a red-headed author and the editor for Sirens Call Publications, who lives in a quiet and inspirational corner of southern England. She has penchants for chocolate, horror and loud guitars, and a fatal weakness for red wine.

Her interests in writing range from horror to erotica, taking in historical romance and tales of the paranormal on the way; whatever she has dreamed about the night before is liable to find its way onto the page in some form or another...

Keep up to date with Kate at fromkatesquill.blogspot.com.

JOSEPH A. PINTO



FLOWERS FOR EVELENE

Everyone has their demons...

EVERYONE HAS THEIR DEMONS....

DOUG PARKERSON KNOWS THIS ALL TOO WELL. HAUNTED AS A CHILD BY THE LOSS OF HIS LOVED ONES VANISHING FROM HIS LIFE ONE AFTER THE OTHER, HE WISHES ONLY TO PUT HIS GRIEF BEHIND HIM AND MOVE ON WITH HIS LIFE. BUT THERE IS ONE PERSON WHO HAS NEVER LEFT HIM...

AND NEVER WILL.

A WOMAN WHOSE INTENSELY TWISTED DESIRES WILL OVERTAKE HIS OWN AND DRIVE HIM TO THE POINT OF NEAR INSANITY.

JOSEPH A. PINTO

JOSEPH A. PINTO LIVES IN NEW JERSEY WITH HIS WIFE AND HIS YOUNG DAUGHTER. WHEN NOT ROOTING FOR THE NEW ORLEANS SAINTS OR GETTING A NEW TATTOO, JOSEPH CAN BE FOUND IN HIS DUNGEON BUSY AT WORK.

CONTACT JOSEPH A. PINTO AT:
@JOSEPHAPINTO
[HTTP://JOSEPHPINTO.WORDPRESS.COM](http://JOSEPHPINTO.WORDPRESS.COM)



FLOWERS FOR EVELENE IS AVAILABLE VIA AMAZON.COM

One Photograph
Three Original Stories



photography by irene snow

Introducing *Odonates*, *On The Wings
of Icarus*, and *The Tango of the Hunt*

Odonates

Beautiful creature of destruction; you are the embodiment of majesty and grandeur darting through the air; humming past in the blink of an eye, stunning your prey into a shock of paralytic fear; engaged always in aerial combat with the currents that fight you in your forward progress; rising, dropping, jerking, zipping.

Always seeking...

What is it you seek on those elegant gossamer wings? Perhaps the next meal that awaits you... What else would a voracious living thing such as yourself desire? You, with your crushing mandibles and gnashing teeth, so willing to consume all that cross your path and thereafter, your gullet. A beast of miniscule proportion whose lust to sate itself knows no bounds - respects no boundaries.

The patter of rain does not deter you from the hunt - your need for nourishment is all consuming; it's all your disjointed body knows. The repeated pumping of your clasping organ seeking purchase as it curves downward to secure a hold in this new and foreign terrain. Your legs spread so delicately, laid wide ever so gently, in this most opportunistic of places. Large bead like eyes of gleaming blackness adapted for spotting the smallest of morsels passing by whilst you suckle on nature's other offerings.

You have at last found a worthy feeding ground amongst the thin grasses of this murky bank. This piece of drift offers a perch from which you may indulge your glutinous greed. You seek a place to hide, a place of recess from which you may ambush your unsuspecting prey.

Cloaked by stealth and the hush of your own inner stillness, you await what tasty treat flicks past seeking a safety all its own whilst knowing not that you are now the monstrous dark occupant which all others must fear in this previously safe harbor. *Nina D'Arcangela*

On The Wings of Icarus

I always wanted to fly.

I used to spend long, hazy summer days down by the lake watching them. Just watching; never daring to try to touch. They were beautiful in a way that I knew I could never be. Their iridescence, their grace - and above all, the way that they arched, swooped and soared through the air. How I wanted to be like them!

I couldn't be beautiful, not like they were. But I could fly. I could find a way, I knew that I could. I devoted myself to mimicking them in the only way I saw possible. I shut myself away and allowed myself to become consumed by my need. It was raw and primal, a fire that burned in every last inch of my body to the exclusion of all else. I simply had to do it. It was everything to me - my *raison d'être*, my one true passion. Nothing else mattered.

The days of summer were long gone by the time I had finally finished my task. Autumnal mist hung heavy in the air, shrouding the cliffs in secrecy as I steadily approached the verge I had chosen. My precious cargo had survived the short journey undamaged. In mere moments, it would be put to its intended purpose.

You may think me a fool, but I took the inspiration for its design from the famous myth of Icarus. His only error was flying too close to the sun, you see. I didn't want to go to the sun. All I wanted was just to fly like them.

Was it so much to ask?

I didn't think so. I perched in readiness, the shimmering wings strapped to my back.

And then... I jumped.

Nothing but air beneath my feet. I was free. *Kate Monroe*

The Tango of the Hunt

Twilight.

The best time of night to stalk. Silent; I await the buzzing sound of wings on the subtle currents of air.

Hidden; awaiting my prey. Mayhap a mosquito with its iridescent wings, searching out a victim of its own. Flying in swarms, intensifying my chances of success.

Or a bee; the noble bee. Spreading the pollen of flowers around as it sucks the sweet nectar from deep inside its fragrant petals. The symbiosis of the hunter and the hunted; need, desire equal only to its clever function.

Nature is like that, coupling risk with reward all around us.

I hear it. The sound my senses have been waiting for, longing for. I'm hungry and I cannot wait any longer.

It's a treat for me tonight. Its wings a myriad of colours; cobalt, gold, crimson, all fluttering in the soft glow of the evening. The soft push of its delicate wings signaling the start of our dance.

The tango of the hunt. My awareness is supreme. I alight, seeking reward for my patience. It does not know I am stalking up behind it; fluttering through the descending darkness, it's blind to everything but its enjoyment of the warm breeze, fragrant with honeysuckle and damp.

Slowly, I gain, my large eyes taking in everything around me, ultimately focused on my desire.

My large wings soundless in the encroaching darkness.

Mere moments until the attack. I can feel it along my body, electrifying the hairs covering me.

Now.

I quicken the beating of my wings. Up and down, they caress the air, my prey seeming to come closer.

Crushing pain.

Torn wings.

Body buckling under the pressure.

Devouring its meal with a slow vigour reserved for such moments.

A reward for patience.

As the butterfly flutters away, the hunter becomes the hunted. *Kalla Monahan*

Three Unique Perspectives on the Same Photograph

Make sure to pick up our second issue to read what we use as our next inspiration...

City of Hell Chronicles Volume 1 by Anachron Press

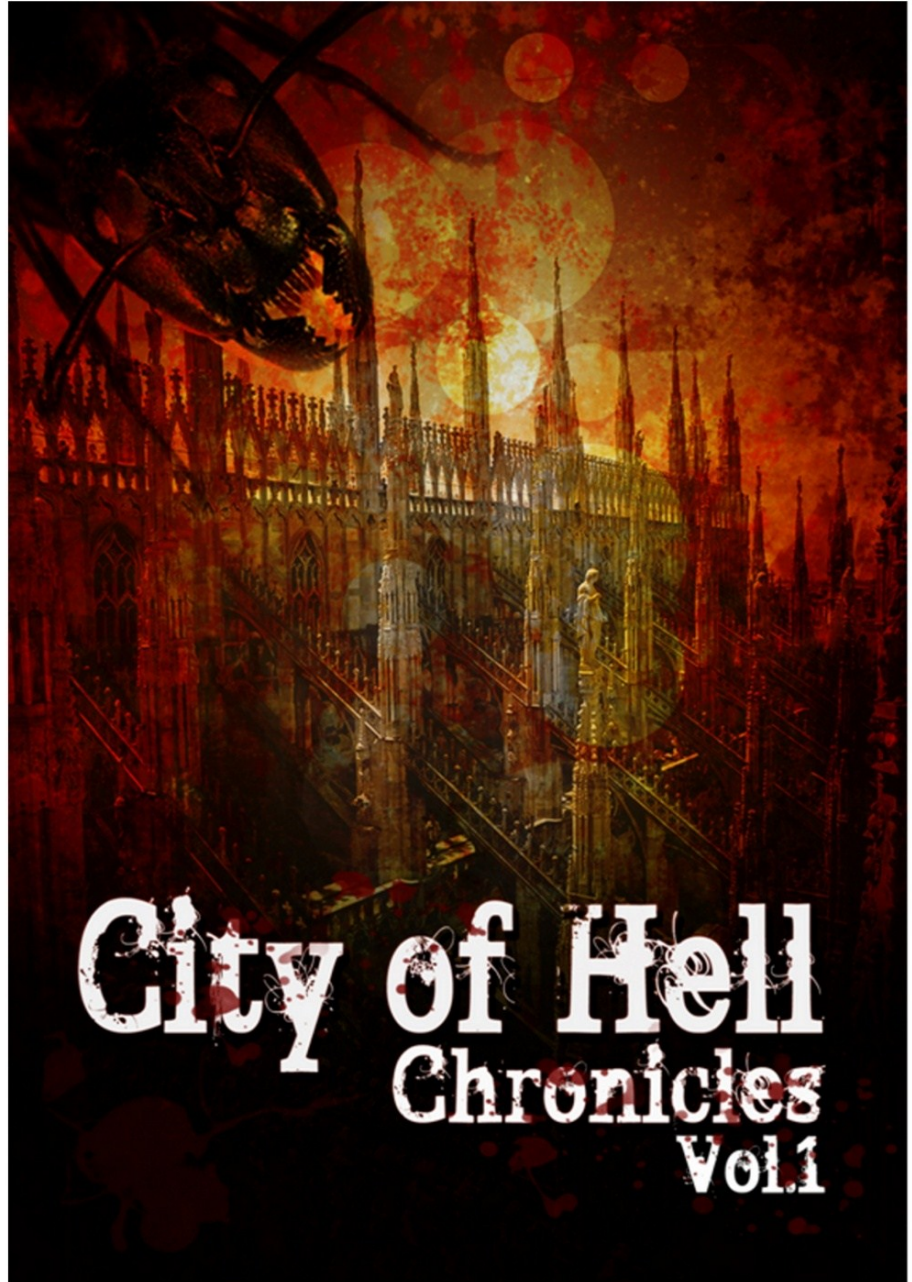
City of Hell Chronicles charts the tales of the last few survivors. The Ant-headed Old One 'The Great Maurr' has risen and brought hell to earth. The land is scorched and the human race decimated, eaten or tortured. Only three cities remain, a crumbled dying version of their former selves: London, Moscow and Hong Kong. The Great Maurr's own City of Hell dominates most of North America. Its diabolical influence has turned ordinary citizens into torturers, debased slaves, lunatics and zealots.

This first release features 8 stories from 7 authors from around the globe (England, Wales, Canada, and USA). Apart from the editor, Colin F. Barnes, all the contributors for this release are women.

This focus on female writers to the horror genre gives the collection a different perspective as we see the horror through female protagonist's eyes.

The goal for this anthology was to try and do something different within the horror genre. We wanted the gore/ickiness as with most horror stories, but we also wanted the human element. I think we have achieved that with this collection.

City of Hell Chronicles Volume 1 is available in both eBook and Paperback versions from a variety of suppliers (Amazon, Lulu, B&N and iBook Store).



www.cityofhellchronicles.com

www.colinfbarnes.com

ANACHRON
PRESS

The kabob skewer was metal with a vicious tip. She dumped half a bottle of rubbing alcohol on it and picked a caked-on piece of steak off with her chewed-to-the-quick fingernails. Her head tipped toward her left shoulder and she bathed her ear with the rest of the liquid, feeling it fill the canal and drown out sound.

The girl had performed many a bathroom self-surgery in the past; ingrown hairs dug out with razors and tweezers, boils lanced with molten-hot sewing needles, that pesky seventh toe on her left foot hacked off between butcher knife and cutting board. That one was a yearly; it grew back like Kudzu on a Big Easy brothel. But no one in her class kept seven toes on a foot. It was obscene. So she held an annual chop-and-hop.

But this was a Porsche of a different color. Permanently removing Johnny Fitzfrizzle from her thoughts would be a grueling task. But it had to happen. She'd rather walk around with all thirteen toes for the rest of high school than spend one more day with that asshole on her mind.

She took a final shot of courage, feeling the strawberry shake slide smoothly down her throat as she slugged it to the dregs. When the brain freeze came upon her, piercing her eye stalks with frigid agony, slicing through her head like a monstrous paper cut to her grey matter, she didn't hesitate. The skewer slid into her ear, breaking through the bubble of astringent as it broke through her ear drum. She angled it down and back, above the brainstem.

Her biology teacher, Mr. Bender, had told her that the limbic system was the emotional center of the brain. That it controlled love. That's where Johnny would be; riding her limbic system hard, heavy on the crop and snuffing out cigarette butts on her hippocampus as he went. That way he would make her forget all the rotten things he had done to her. Make her forget enough to still

want him, even.

No more.

The metal dug and scraped. It hurt, but it was a cleansing pain. She tolerated it, knowing that the suffering would all be over soon. And then the cry sounded. A high pitched, whining shriek that bounced around her skull like a smashed rack of pool balls. She figured him for the strong silent type. Larger than life tough guy with his Lucky Strikes and leather. But he just squealed like a pig at slaughter when it came down to the showdown.

When she pulled the spike out, he even looked like a shining pink pig on a spit. All five inches of him, wet and bloody with afterbirth. Cerebello Jello. She had the crazy notion to lick him, but refrained.

"How could you do this to me, Rach? After everything we had together?" He pulled a cigarette out from behind his ear. That was handy, because he was naked.

"You got a light?"

Who the hell enters into bathroom surgery without a lighter for sterilizing instruments?

"Of course." She smiled sweetly as the flame jumped up and engulfed his face. He was lucky he was so damp. That was quite a strike.

"Mother Fucker! What the hell are you trying to do? Kill me, Rachel?"

She turned the tap. It squeaked as a jet of cold shot out. She held his impaled form under the stream to muffle his scream. Johnny sputtered like a dying car, coughing while crying. It sounded kinda cute. His cancer stick slid down the toothpaste-spattered brown enamel and disappeared under the stopper.

"COLD!" He wailed. He was really showing his stripes. If only the other members of the chess team could see him now.

Not so cool anymore, are you Johnny Fizzlegizzard?

"Cold like your frozen heart, you bastard. If I had known you were incapable of love, I

never would have looked twice at your stupid freckled ass."

His face twisted into a malignant sneer. Horns grew from his forehead and an arrow-tipped tail slithered from behind his back.

"Incapable of love? Oh, I've loved, Baby. Far and wide. Givin' more than you will ever get. This heart is burning hot, but never for the likes of you. You unworthy whore."

Fire spewed from his mouth on the last word, fueled by his venom.

So that's why he took that snake-handling course.

She doused him again to cool him off. Picked his puny person off of the skewer and held him down with the seven fingers of her left hand while the six on her right corkscrewed the tweezer-prongs into his chest. She ripped his measly plastic heart out like that old operation game. She was the doctor, but the patient couldn't run.

His eyes had turned to X's. She plopped

him in the toilet and considered saying her goldfish prayer --Oh Lord of the Shitter, my tears are so bitter. To your celestial sewer I offer my dear [insert name of fish here]. But Johnny Flobblenobbins was no fish. He wasn't worth the detritus in the filter.

His limp little body swirled and swirled. Red blood followed his pink form like crappy spin art until the Lord of the Shitter finally reached a skeletal hand up to pull him down to the other side.

She plucked a piece of tape off the dispenser.

Who the hell enters into bathroom surgery without a roll of Scotch tape?

She stuck the gore-wrapped heart onto her bathroom mirror. Whenever Rachel looked at her reflection it would remind her that she was loveable. She had Johnny Fucknugget's heart, after all.

Kimber Vale writes bizarro, horror, and erotica. She loves mixing genres and pens less racy material using the name on her driver's license.

Kim can be found at Bizrotic Musings, the blog: kimbervale.wordpress.com.

Also on Facebook at Kimber Vale and

Twitter: @KimberVale.



Robert Ropars

Robert Ropars is a horror author residing in the Chicago suburbs. When not creating his chilling works of fiction, he enjoys writing poetry, photography, adapting early tech and movies. Despite his love for blood and gore, he's working toward becoming a full vegetarian – interesting...

Dark Bites: Four Tales of Horror (Director's Cut)



ROBERT ROPARS

Exclusive Amazon Edition

Dark Bites: Four Tales of Horror is a short story collection focusing on four amazing women facing classic creatures we love to fear: zombies, vampires, werewolves, ghosts and more.

Part 1 - **Windy City of the Dead** Crow needs to get out of Chicago fast with just her wits and any weapons she can find. But between her and escape are hordes of brain-chomping zombies spreading their plague across the city and through her condo building. 52 floors to go...

Part 2 - **Like Cats and Dogs** Adriana is bitten by a jaguar in Guatemala. Returning to Chicago, she learns of a renegade were-wolf on a rampage. Can she learn the ways of the were-jaguar from a ghostly guide named Lily before the next full moon? Or will she fall victim to the wolf as Lily did?

Part 3 - **The Red Planet** Jenny is a vampire escaping the ravages of war and genocide on Earth for colonies on Mars. Looking back 300 years, she remembers the night she died and was reborn a vampire.

Part 4 - **848** In 1979 the worst blizzard in history dumped 19" of snow on Chicago. A canceled flight leads Marie to seek shelter in the city. As the city is buried, she is trapped with a sexual predator in a fight for her life-she doesn't stand a ghost of a chance.

And includes *As The Crow Flies* – a story not found anywhere else and is the sequel to *Windy City of the Dead*.

Connect with Robert on Twitter @robertropars
or by email at robropars@gmail.com

Also Available – Dead Man's Curve (Amazon Exclusive eBook)

At a military-funded drug testing facility, April West is brutally murdered by a jealous co-worker. Driven by a zombie-fueled hunger for brains, flesh and blood, she rises undead to seek bloody revenge on those who have wronged her.

The military has been waiting for a chance to capture a "live" zombie for decades and they mobilize to capture April. Will she fall into their trap before she feasts on her killer's brains or have they underestimated the power of an undead woman scorned?

Dead Woman's Curve



Robert Ropars

A KINDLE FOR CHRISTMAS Alex Woolf

The commuter train was unusually empty for a Tuesday morning. We were in that odd hiatus between Christmas and New Year when many firms decide to remain closed. In fact, as far as I could tell without standing up and looking about, the carriage contained no one but myself and the gentleman opposite. I'd grown to know this gentleman's face very well over my ten years of travelling on the 8.05 from Hertford North, though we'd never once exchanged a word. I had long ago decided that he had a front-office sort of face, by which I mean the face of someone who meets and greets the public, rather than the type who hides himself away behind a computer screen all day. He had friendly wrinkles, which had gradually deepened over the years of our non-speaking acquaintance, and he had beautifully combed hair which was now graying at the temples. Along with these normal, physical signs of ageing, I thought I'd also detected a certain depletion of the spirit, as if the burdens of life were gradually, by degrees, defeating him. His eyes had dulled, the skin beneath them sagging.

This morning, he was sitting there with his *Daily Telegraph* as usual propped before his nose, while I perused my new Christmas present, and it appeared at first that we were destined to spend yet another journey in companionable silence.

Then, suddenly, he spoke.

"Is that a Kindle?" he asked with polite curiosity, indicating my Christmas present.

I looked up, surprised and pleased.

"Yes," I said. "My wife gave it to me. It's her solution to the problem of my books."

"Ah," he twinkled knowingly. "You have too many, and they're cluttering up the house?"

"Guilty as charged," I nodded. "I'm a compulsive book buyer, and I can never bring myself to throw any of them away."

"I know how you feel," said the man. "I have the same issue with music. I love my LP records, but so far I've managed to resist all my wife's attempts to buy me an MP3 player."

The man was evidently impressed by the slim black rectangle in my hands. He was now peering closely at it.

"Classical music?" I asked.

"No longer, sadly," he said, looking up. "I've developed an unfortunate aversion to its upper ranges. Violin particularly. These days I prefer jazz." He returned his attention to the Kindle. "Pretty little thing, isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," I said. "I have to admit it has its advantages over ink and paper."

Of course the Kindle could halt the traffic of books coming into our house, but could do nothing about the books already there. Carol's solution to *that* problem had been much more drastic. I was sure I'd never forget the sight of all my precious darlings boxed up in the entrance hall, ready for dispatch to the charity shop.

The man was evidently intrigued by the Kindle. I held it up for him to look at.

"It's the latest version, you know," I said, "— complete with voice recognition technology."

"Voice recognition technology!" he said. "Well, well. What will they think of next?"

"Indeed," I replied, and I couldn't resist recounting an amusing incident that had befallen me on Christmas Day. "Something happened to me," I told him, "that proves there are hidden hazards as well as unexpected bonuses in voice recognition. You see, as soon as my wife gave me this Kindle, I knew exactly what I wanted to read on it: *The Interceptor*, my favorite thriller by my favorite writer, Harold Mortimer." — *This being one of the many, many books Carol had obliged me to give away!* — "So, with the device barely out of its wrapping, I said to it in a bold voice: 'I would like to buy a book from the Kindle Store', and this soft, rather lovely female voice immediately replied: 'Which book would you like to buy, Mr. Foster?' It knew my name because my wife had already linked it up to my account. I told it what I

wanted. ‘*The Interceptor*,’ I said, ‘by Harold Mortimer,’ to which Miss Kindle smoothly responded: ‘*The Interceptor* by Herod Mortier is now in your basket. Say “yes” to confirm your purchase.’”

I paused to allow John to absorb what I’d said, and was slightly disappointed not to see him smile. Undeterred, I continued with my tale: “I couldn’t believe it,” I said. “Perhaps I’d had one too many glasses of bucks fizz that morning, but when I heard this, I simply burst out laughing, and so did my wife. “Yes!” she cried. “Oh yes indeed!””

I was laughing myself by this stage, as the memory of that moment by the fireside came back to me. I was particularly pleased with my impersonation of Miss Kindle’s voice. “‘Purchase confirmed’ the voice said, and sure enough, this completely unwanted, unasked for and hitherto unknown book, dropped into my Kindle!”

“Well, I never,” said my companion. “How strange. Fancy there being two books with such similar titles by such similar-sounding authors. What are the chances of that?” He put down his paper and held his hand out to me. “I’m John, by the way. John Axelquist. Pleased to finally meet you after all these years.” “Likewise,” I said, wiping laughter-tears from my eyes before shaking his hand – the retelling of the story had given me much unanticipated pleasure. “Alan Foster. Oh dear!” I gasped, wiping my eye again. “Very pleased to meet you.”

“And this book,” asked John, “– this *Interfactor*. Is it any good?”

I nodded vigorously. “That was the unexpected bonus I was talking about earlier. The thing is, it *is* good. In fact, it’s rather brilliant. I’m so engrossed in it, I’ve completely put off buying the Mortimer book. I want to finish this one first.”

“So what’s it about?” enquired John, his paper now lying forgotten on the table.

“Well,” I replied, “this Herod Mortier chap seems to have been a type of early self-help guru. He wrote this book at the beginning of the last century and, according to Wikipedia, he was known in those days as a rather dodgy mystic and occultist. But as far as I can make out, his advice is really very, you know, straightforward. There’s nothing mystical about it, so far as I can tell.”

“What sort of advice does he give?” asked John Axelquist.

I frowned, trying to think of a way of encapsulating the flavor of the two hundred or so pages I’d read.

“It’s quite hard to summarize, but I suppose you could say, in essence, it’s about taking control of your life. Not letting people or events deflect you from your purpose.”

“Sounds quite modern.”

“Yes, I suppose it is really. But it’s helped me already, in some little ways... I’m looking forward to trying it out at work.”

This prompted John to ask me what I did for a living, and we spoke about that for a while, but I noticed his eyes kept returning to the Kindle resting in my hands. Eventually he nodded at it and said: “But tell me, Alan, in practical terms, what’s this chap actually saying?”

I didn’t welcome this question, as the book was so damnably hard to summarize. “Well, you see,” I began, “he talks – well he talks about training yourself to see the world differently – he says we spend most of our lives rather like, uh, little boats in the ocean, getting buffeted by winds and tossed around by waves and suchlike. We have to – to become masters instead of slaves to what he calls life’s, uh, elemental forces. He says, well, he says... uh.” I was floundering like a little boat in the ocean. “Look,” I eventually suggested, “perhaps it would be best if I read you some of it. Or, better still, I’ll let Miss Kindle read it to you.” I chuckled. “That’s another clever little optional extra on this version – you can be read to in any voice you like. It’s like being a child again!”

John didn’t object, so I laid the Kindle on the table between us, turned to a page I’d found particularly

memorable, and switched it to 'read aloud' mode. "This is the default voice," I explained, "which reminds me rather nostalgically of a schoolteacher I once had, but we can always change it if you'd prefer something different."

"I'm sure it's fine, Alan," he said. "Please continue."

The lady began to read, and as he took in her words, I watched John Axelquist's face gradually change. His eyes widened and a slight flush became apparent on his cheeks. That saggy, careworn expression I had grown accustomed to in recent years faded, giving way to a younger look that I recalled from our earliest journeys together. His eyes sparkled and his jaw became firmer, as if a new energy and purpose had suffused him.

When it was finished, he looked me straight in the eye and said: "Thank you, Alan. I see exactly what you mean. I really think this might help me."

"At work?"

"Perhaps, but mostly at home."

Soon after this, the train drew into Old Street Station, and John Axelquist stood up to leave. As he stood, he offered me a little smile and a bow of the head. "Until tomorrow then, Alan," he said, and then he left, while I continued on my way to Moorgate.

I didn't see John on the train the following morning. That evening I arrived home, as usual, at six o'clock. As I was hanging up my coat in the entrance hall, I caught a whiff of something from the kitchen. I was pleased to see the boxes filled with my books in the hallway. It had been expensive buying them all back from the charity shop, but worth every penny. I would enjoy returning them to their shelves after supper. I went into the living room and switched on the evening news. There was a report about a talented female musician who'd been found dead in her Hertford home, strangled by one of her own violin strings. Her name caught my attention. Mary Axelquist. How funny!

On the screen, a reporter was standing outside a semi-detached house saying: "The victim's husband, John Axelquist, confessed to the crime at Hertford police station this morning. According to a police spokeswoman, Axelquist claimed to have been influenced by a book called *The Interfector*, also known as *The Killer*, by Herod Mortier. The book, which he apparently discovered as an eBook on a friend's Kindle, has been subject to a worldwide ban – a ban that came into force only a few years after its publication in 1901 because of its allegedly pernicious effects on any who read it. Amazon have announced they are launching an internal investigation to discover exactly how an eBook version of this work became available—"

I switched off the television. That's quite enough of that, I thought. Time to go and say hello to Carol. I found her in the kitchen, sitting at the table, knife and fork in hand, ready to tuck into her plate of Christmas dinner. It was funny to see her sitting there with her party hat still on. I bent down and kissed her on the cheek.

Alex Woolf was born in London in 1964. He is a big fan of horror stories, Kindles and Christmas and decided that it was high time someone tried combining them. He writes both fiction and non-fiction for a living, mainly for children, with upwards of forty titles (and far too many Danish pastries) under his belt. His non-fiction is wide-ranging, covering everything from spiders to Nazis and a surprising number of things in between. Among his most recent fiction projects are a time-warping sci-fi trilogy called *Chronosphere*, published by Scribo, and an interactive horror e-novel called *Soul Shadows*, published by Fiction Express. He lives in Southgate, North London, with his wife and two children.

Author website: <http://alexwoolf.co.uk>

Chronosphere website: <http://www.salariya.com/chronosphere>



The Dead Party

Shah Wharton

Hugged by a cloak of darkness, I could still see for miles. The night sky lit up by a golden glow of fire blazing across the country, beneath clouds of toxic smoke. Where fires had died, blackened tar-like mounds sat cooling. It had become eerily quiet of late, though it used to be so vibrant. It was all such an awful waste; cars burned out, houses deserted, the smell of rotting flesh, and piss everywhere. It made me miserable, nauseous and livid.

Sitting upon the roof-top of the former Mrs. Whelms – a consultant of some sort, no less - I searched out the vile Dead, who in their armies swiftly took control of our district one month ago. Everything's changed. They now have complete control over our whole island, but not me. Not yet.

Strange to concede that ninety percent of my previously living comrades supposedly voted for the Dead Party to govern what is now called District 6. Even the Green Party would have seemed like a better option in the absence of our Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour councilors, who all bizarrely disappeared only one week before voting began. They still haven't turned up. No doubt they found out what was to become of us and fled - or maybe they were supper, and still adhere to the Dead Party's rotting stomach lining.

"The democratic process has proved a positive one," the Dead Party had said. Of course, the living demanded a re-count, but it wasn't allowed, as with all investigations into their dubious habits. "It's Political Correctness gone mad," people cried. Others frowned on them, trained to do so by a polite society. Besides, there was never enough proof of fixing the vote to use against them, and without evidence there was nothing to investigate.

With power came numbers. They popped up everywhere, or should I say slithered and shuffled? Their pong began to loiter generally, even in cafes and restaurants. How rude? We could no longer enjoy a bag of chips without their *death* hanging around, polluting our noses. I lost my appetite right around then.

Their yellow eyes – encircled with red rims – are the worst. Man, they're ugly, especially when they weep a pus-like substance, like septic tears down rotting cheeks. I noticed this delightful reaction was to hunger or anger. And the Dead were usually either angry or hungry, so there's a lot of pus. I felt sickened just thinking of it... seeping out. And yet the Dead seem oblivious to their putrid condition, as though they had forgotten all about vanity along with breathing and the sanctity of life.

Take a shower – use soap – brush what's left of those browning teeth for Heaven's sake. Hello?

How did it come to this? I have no clue, quite simply. I fell asleep one evening after a movie I cannot now recall – as one does – and when I woke up it was all over the news: "The Dead rise again!" I had to ask myself, *'When did they rise the first time?'* I thought it to be some stunt by a flagging media mogul, or a clever ruse by some bored saddo sitting alone on his computer with a techie brain and too much time on his hands. Ah, in fact my very first thoughts were that it must be the residue of a nightmare, not fully shaken off.

I read about the election in a discarded tabloid. But who believes anything in them anymore? Sadly, as the day moved on and more news came in, it became clear that the Dead were indeed walking around my country, my town, and pretty soon after that, in my street. My doctor, my news agent and the till girl at Tesco's: all Dead, though grossly animated of course. They couldn't continue their former professions once the change came, thankfully. At first I thought they'd lost their jobs due to some kind of understandable work-placed prejudice. Well, I wouldn't like to buy food from the Dead either, and who would take health-care advice from a dead guy? A fool, perhaps? But I found out that losing their jobs had less to do with customer services and more to do with the fact that the growing legions of the Dead all needed to be trained to perform as foot-soldiers for their elite.

They do a good line in recruitment, apparently. Though what the incentives are, I cannot imagine.

When I originally heard the news of the invasion, after all the silly thinking and wondering passed,

the first thing I actually did was call Spain. Not so unusual when you learn that my dear mother lives there alone. I needlessly feared all sorts of things. She eased my qualms however, when she explained that mostly “...these things” only occurred in big cities and that as she lived in a “...quaint little village” she would mercifully remain untouched by “...such things.” She’s a strict agnostic and doesn’t believe in zombies or vampires or “...whatever else they’re calling themselves these days.” She doesn’t believe in global warming either, so I don’t know what I was expecting.

Convinced of her safety, at least temporarily, I called my husband who’s a pilot for Emirates. He was in the air and I couldn’t speak to him, much to my frustration. Thankfully though, according to the secretary who I did speak to, they don’t have the ‘Dead Party’ in Dubai, so that was a huge relief. I’m not surprised, mind you; it’s far too hot to be dead there. The rot really would set in. At least in the UK one can rot slowly in the rain. I pondered a little after the call and decided that perhaps becoming a Muslim was the way to go, after all? No one could tell whether I was dead or alive beneath all the black. *And I do love black.* I committed myself to giving it serious thought just as soon as I could fly my ass out of the United Kingdom, away from the wicked contamination and into the loving arms of my husband. Yes – Dubai looked incredibly like heaven at that point.

Then the powers that be went and closed all the damned airports. Typical. Of course, because they are so bloody ‘precious’ and far more important than the ‘little people’, the rich and powerful who had somehow escaped death were flown out quick-sharp, way before the quarantine was imposed upon us. It seems remarkably unfair under the circumstances. I never chose the Royal Family, or the lawyers and statesmen, or the government officials, or the Mayor for that matter; but there they were, after they had ditched their electorate, deciding that the survivors of this plague would have to pretty much *deal with it* until they decided what to do next – if indeed they would do anything other than wait for us all to die, rot and starve. A shocking and frustrating state of affairs. I considered writing a stern letter to my local council.... then thought, perhaps not. My local Councilor died and shuffled along toward the sound of any heartbeat. I had to assume he’d be unsympathetic to my cause.

Some may wonder why I began discussing such things whilst sitting on the roof of Mrs. Whelms. Well, I’m ashamed to admit that I’m hiding. I’m also terrified 24/7. Shortly after the Dead took over, it all got antsy, understandably. Their guise of *reasonable behavior* began to slip sharply. The People began to say ‘No!’ too often and too loud. The People began banging on doors, screaming about their human rights, like citizens of a free world have been taught to do. They barricaded themselves into airports demanding to be flown to safety, assuming the Dead would be forced to comply. The People were indignant, armed with abusive mouths and the occasional rounder’s bat. It was a sight to behold. However, all protest landed on dead ears, just as I’d warned Mrs Whelms. It got us nowhere.

Being more lady than lout, I of course hid. I decided to wait it out at home rather than fight, figuring naively that our government or some neighboring country would eventually send in their troops. But nada - not a sausage.

Almost straight away, all communication was blocked so we had no idea what was happening to the rest of the world. No phone, internet or television. No post-person delivered my Ebay purchases, no letters of comfort arrived from abroad. Nothing fell from my letterbox onto the mat below, save for political propaganda leaflets telling me that if I supported the ‘Dead Party,’ I would only have to give blood twice a week and would be paid in advance. When people started dying from these *donations*, they explained, “Yeah, but when they woke up they had become a fully-fledged, badge wearing party member...with *all the privileges that would command*,” whatever they were. A license to eat flesh and pong, perhaps?

Hurrah, bring it on. Not.

Naturally, the Dead didn't like rebellion and began revealing even more of their true natures: the Death Contract became obligatory.

"Join us willingly or painfully," became the only options afforded us. I opted... out. When the Dead came to my home, I ran and rarely looked back. I went into hiding. It's lonely and filthy, but it's also the best diet I ever tried; I lost half a stone in the first fortnight. I always try to look for the silver-lining in everything. Of course, I now look fabulously thin but there's no Hubble to flirt with... or women to compete with. Typical!

Thousands surprisingly chose Death rather than to fight; something about the allure of immortality perhaps? I blame 'Twilight'. Thousands more eventually had the choice taken from them, barbarically. Their blood looked like the main contender for a paint party as it tinted the lanes and roads and parks of every village and town. The rotting flesh left on stony white cadavers began to infect rats and dogs and cats, hence the many fires and tar-like mounds. If a survivor sees a stray, they burn it in some meager attempt to control the infection. Despite this, walking along a quiet street was a risk even if the Dead didn't see you. The animals would at some point and all it took was a nip.

I wear Doc Martens laced up to my knees, which I looted, to my shame. I'd have paid if there had been a check-out girl who wasn't lunching on an elderly person, staring at me as if I was dessert while she did so. The circumstances required a quick in and out, so theft was the only way to go. I've since abandoned all issues with such petty criminality however. I mean to survive after all. I might look like an Eighties skin-head, robbing shops and wearing such footwear, but at least I'm alive.

Crime in the form of looting and burglary became a big problem quickly, and continues to be, although the Dead need far less than the living. They thrive on instruction and the freshest raw meat, and as long as they have these, unattended belongings are entirely safe. Humans were different however and when the Dead's reasonable guise quickly slipped, it all got antsy. You see, many of the Dead lost table manners after the change and well, seeing a child taken as elevenses in the street while their mother looks on screaming, is enough to cause mayhem in any populous. So yes, crime increased big time, and quickly.

So much for the Dead Party making *positive changes* and being *tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime*. They'll never get my vote. Although eating criminals was certainly '*tough on crime*,' they still couldn't guarantee there would be no repeat offending.

It all seemed pretty hopeless, but I still became one of the minority *problem people* who wouldn't conform to political requirements for the so called - *betterment of the populous as a whole* - who escaped. And I continue to do so by the skin of my teeth, no matter what. To think, I was once a shy conformist who rarely voted, who preferred to remain invisible within society. Now I'm a reluctant '*political reformist*,' an '*agitator*' and '*rebel on the run*.' Unprepared for such titles, I fear that very soon I'll simply be... '*Dead*.' Not a title anyone relishes. So I hide... and hide well. That is, until they find me. Then I run. I'm still running.

From the lofty view of Mrs Whelms' roof-top, I watched them creeping and crawling nearer. So lonely and silent without birds flapping wings or the scurry of insects. Not a single barking dog or bellowing police siren. No terrorizing youths on the corner, or base booming boy racers to distract me. All the birds have flown away and where do spiders go to when the climate changes?

I noticed the officer in charge was in fact Jessica. She'd been a weak-willed woman with three children with different fathers, and a drink problem, whilst alive. I liked her. The pressure to be successful as a woman - in all things - is a paralyzing feminist issue, yet Jessica provoked no rivalry in me, making friendship easy. Her dress sense hadn't changed much; she must have owned every item in her ample size which had ever been made from leopard print. Today was a tragic example. She looked like the

zombie version of Bet Lynch.

I wondered where her children were now and what the Dead did with the vulnerable in general. After all, you'd think the biggest disability of all would be death. Shouldn't they empathise with vulnerability? Yet, their striking absence in all propaganda literature and on streets, in hospitals, anywhere, was disturbing almost more disturbing than the ever more blatant slaughter. All disability homes had been closed, hospitals had been heavily guarded, and health care providers were recruited as Death soldiers, so who was left to take care of them?

Have they all been 'terminated' in an act of genocide, I wondered? And who would be better off at the very end of things - those dead and buried or those dead and walking? Or perhaps, even more gruesomely, they had been kept in reserve for the inevitable food shortage?

Jessica and her crew crept through the damp, dreary street, with yellow, weeping eyes, grey rotting skin, and a stench which reached my guts and threatened to make me retch out loud. Their diet was fresh raw meat and blood so I doubted Jessica needed a bottle of Smirnoff and lucky shag in quite the same way.

What do you intend to do for food when we're all dead, idiots?

Answers on a postcard please.

I thought and considered pointless things, while remaining as quiet as a mouse, but without the squeaking, and praying they would pass beneath me and leave me be.

The slightly less depressing part to all this is that it seems I have developed a supernatural skill. I know; bizarre, right? I've become increasingly aware of changes within myself during my rebellious fleeing stage. Some may – for instance – wonder how I got on to a roof. I could have climbed up I suppose, but if I'm honest, the last thing I climbed was a small tree in a pub beer garden, and I was around nine at the time. And although these boots are great at protecting me from infected rodents or the like, they don't aid flexibility. Truth is, I sprinted from the Dead troops faster than I had ever ran in my life and the further I ran, the quicker I became.

Superb, this kind of speed is going to come in handy.

But speed wasn't all powerful on its own. The many Dead were about to corner me, leaving my limited options stolen. Any direction I chose would quickly be filled with Pesky Pongsters! They were everywhere and I was the only other survivor I knew of.

Give me a goddamn break.

I thought I'd finally come to the end of the road. I would be one of them within the hour, or devoured by them, slowly and in agonizing pain.

Perfect!

Then, for some bizarre reason, I looked up. I don't know why. My history hadn't taught me that if I looked up it would provide an alternative escape route. I'm not a bird for heaven's sake. But I looked up anyway. And hey-presto, I shot through the sky like I'd been propelled by a super-large sling-shot and landed on this very roof, somewhere close but out of their reach. They'd lost me – again. My stomach flipped with temporary joy as I reveled in my victory.

They're gonna be so pissed and blinded by pus.

That brings us to here. Problem is, now I don't know what to do. Does this mean I can fly or not? Well, I can't think of what else it could mean: that I can target myself to a desired location? God knows, yet seems unperturbed by my predicament enough to withhold this information. And anyway, I had no desired location in mind apart from ...*the Hell outta here*. And where could this talent have *sprung* from? Sorry! Well it made me snigger and there's precious little of that going on.

Whatever the answer, the important thing is that I now looked down – undetected – on clueless

Continued on page 54



Jessica and her cronies as they walked beneath me, rubbing the paper-thin skin on their chins and furrowed the torn, blistering flesh of their brow, all looking for me. All stunned at my disappearance.

Their superiors will be furious. I smiled.

I felt good for a tiny moment as they left at last, shuffling way from beneath me.

My neighbor's cat sat watching me from the next roof-top. I imagined him smiling and waving, asking if I fancied company and support in these trying times. He seemed healthy enough and alive, with his shiny coat, sparkly eyes, spring to his step. Plus, he didn't lick his lips when he looked at me. I figured we could both use some petting. I'd escaped, hadn't I? They seemed convinced I'd simply vanished. So, I took a deep breath, thought of the cat and leapt through the air, the wind in my face and the joy of flight in my seemingly free and life-filled heart.

Until – that is – I landed on my ass in the dirt of next door's garden.

"Ouch!" I screeched. "Crap... I've blown it." I knew the Dead were certain to hear me and turn their corpse's right around. The damn cat seemed to look down at me, laughing. Then he turned and as easily as a bird, jumped, flying to the roof-top I'd just left. Seems the thoughts I'd had about his needing me, were more about me needing him.

"Brilliant." I said, incensed.

As I tried to stand, I slipped on the rain-sodden muddy grass beneath me. Their smell grew stronger as they moved toward the noise, and no doubt my own smell. I struggled up, then sprinted through the night, not sure which direction to take and once more, unconfident of my new-found abilities.

What went wrong?

I could hear the Death squad shouting and laughing behind me. Their rotting lips pursed to whistles, telling those near to follow the sound for supper. I felt them closing in, saw them grinning over my shoulder.

"You're all in serious need of a dental hygienist." I shouted. They couldn't quite catch up with me at this pace, but remained too close for comfort. As new Dead joined the chase, I couldn't count of there not being more round any corner I chose. Plus, I knew I couldn't keep running at this or any speed for long; I'd pass out from such exertion eventually. Hell, I hadn't eaten since...? Looking up to the roof-tops, to the trees which seemed to reach out to the firmament for help, knew I had to lose my assailants for long enough to leap to safety, with fingers crossed and a prayer on my lips. It had to work this time or I would be taken, partially eaten, then shuffle along with the rest of the United Kingdom.

No!

It would be no use escaping to a higher level, only for them to see where I'd landed however. They would simply stand guard till someone found a ladder. Also, there was no point leaping only to find that whatever had happened earlier was a fluke.

"Oh Lord, wake up and smell these bastards!" I spluttered through spit. Not the best prayer, but I'm agnostic for Christ's sake.

Inhale... one, two, three – leap.

"Ah!"

I landed somewhat painfully, but sat safely cradled high within the arms of the great oak at the end of our road, situated before the bus stop but after Charlie's Chippy. My stomach groaning just thinking of what Charlie used to sell. Gathering breath and my bearings I prayed none of the Dead saw where I landed. I'd often stood beneath this lovely old tree during rain storms, while waiting for the 21 bus to work. I had hoped someone might one day endeavor to install a bus shelter, but it never happened. Council Tax was for champagne buffets and immigration, apparently. A cynic? Me?

I longed for the times when such things bothered me in the absence of imminent doom, while

branches and twigs grew incongruent with the delicate surface of my flesh. My comfy leggings were of little help to me while perching in a tree.

Note to self: If you escape, get some denim on your ass.

I struggled to find a snuggler, more secure position before the Dead came searching beneath me. When they reached my tree, they looked around themselves for evidence of my escape route. They slavered, anticipating my taste.

Ha! You're clearly flabbergasted. And disgusting.

They never once looked up. Why would they; humans don't fly!

So what the Hell am I doing?

Then that Sly-Cat came creeping down the street. I noticed a few hungry glances fired her way from the slithering dead. Small animals are not regarded as satisfactory food-stuffs primarily, but they'll do in the absence of a larger offering, like me. I considered it to be like settling for a green salad when you really wanted a fry-up.

God, I'm hungry!

Sly-Cat noticed their hunger and hissed viciously, looking for his getaway, but soon realized he'd walked into a walking dead party and he'd become the star attraction. Then, he meowed loud enough to attract all of their attention before looking in my direction.

I'm stunned, you evil shit.

He no doubt said in cat-speak, "Hey you guys, why bother with a tiny fluff-ball like me, when you could have big lady-bird up there?"

At first, the Dead didn't understand Sly-Cat. The Dead were not quick-witted as a rule, though there were always exceptions to a rule. Besides, they simply wanted something for supper and to recruit themselves an annoying rebel. But a clever Jessica sniffed - and sniffed again, like some blood-hound on the chase. Looking at the cat, she followed its eye contact right up to me; uneasily perched, curling-up my tired body as small as possible. My pathetic attempt at invisibility didn't work. I had been grassed-up by a cat.

"Shit... pesky cat!" I cursed.

As soon as Jessica saw me, the cat made its getaway. All now focused on me.

Great - now what?

I knew a failed leap from the tree to a roof-top could leave me on my butt again, only this time I'd be directly at the feet of around fifty of the Dead. They stood looking up at me, salivating from *all* orifices, notable by the damp patches in clothes and the rotten stench emitted.

What's their next move - can they climb trees?

It seemed not. They seemed overwhelmed by their hunger, grabbing nonsensically at the bark in the hope they would lay their hands of a branch low enough to propel them to me. Even Jessica had lost her focus temporarily. They had been chasing me for hours and clearly needed refreshments. I knew the feeling. Fortunately, I had a bottle of water in my back-pack which I took three great gulps from. Of course, then I needed a wee!

Typical.

Jessica calmed down, focused then spoke into her radio: Click - "We have her. She's in a tree... can't reach her. Bring a ladder to Charlie's Chippy." - Click.

Just my luck to land next to a well-known landmark.

To me she said, "Come down. Join us, buddy. What's all this fuss about? Relax and enjoy being part of a majority. Isn't that what you always preferred? You never liked to stand out. But now you're standing out like a politician on MumsNet." She giggled at her own joke, though it was clearly lost on her

comrades, who all looked at each other in bemusement.

Well, I knew there'd be exceptions.

"Come on, come down now. Give us a sip each, then after a sleep, wake-up and you're one of us. I'll even tell them to let you come out on recruitments with us. It's fun. I miss our coffee-mornings sweetie." She followed this nausea inducing lie with an evil and hideous smirk. She needed a tooth-pick – Big-time!

I replied, "Have you seen yourself, Jess? Can't you smell yourself? I don't want to be a corpse... I always favored cremation for that very reason. Leave me alone. All of you... just get lost!" Oh if only that would work. But Jessica frowned, licked her thin, blood-stained, scabby lips and scratched her head. Dirty blonde hair fell to her feet. One of her minions ran off. Moments later he returned with blood and fur around his mouth.

Sly-Cat?

Jessica slapped him hard around his face, dislodging some flesh and two teeth. Then she grabbed both his ears in fists and licked the blood from around his mouth. When she pushed him away, she still had one ear in her hand. She sniffed it and tossed it away. Too dead for her appetite, I imagine. The one-eared guy seemed unfazed as he reached up to touch the space left, and looked at his ear at his feet, frowning.

"Oh yeah, I wanna join your gang." I said.

"Your loss...I'm bored with you already. I want to eat. We'll get you as soon as the ladder arrives. It's not as though you're going anywhere else now, is it?" she spluttered in reply, licking her grotesque smile.

I found being overlooked by these revolting creatures surprisingly conducive to thought. I convinced myself that the two catalysts to flight were to jump from a very fast run, and being cornered by the Dead. Only these two conditions were present in both episodes of flight.

Unfortunately, neither option is open to me now. I can't take a running jump while trapped in a tree and although it is close, I'm not yet 'about' to be caught.

I figured that when the ladder arrives I will at least fit the latter condition. I reach this conclusion just as a white Volvo turns up. A large Dead guy got out, removes the ladder from its roof and sets it against my tree. He wears a pink tutu along with stonewashed jeans, work-boots and an Iron Maiden t-shirt, for some bizarre reason.

Christ, this is it. Please God, let me fly. Yes, I am also a hypocrite and do what everyone else does when they are shitting themselves.

Willing myself to reach the nearest chimney pot, I braced myself for the required leap. His face came in to view, revealing gruesome features. Jaundiced eyes, slimy with sepsis; hoary and flaky flesh with boils ready to pop; and a nose about to fall free from his face meant he didn't smell his noxious stench. Two large hands with three missing digits reached out to grab me. With fingers crossed, and with all the will in the world, I leapt up into the dark sky. I felt myself flying through the air and an overwhelming sense of freedom encased me.

The darkness seemed to cleanse me of Death as it hid my pathway further into to freedom... yet I saw no roof-top or tree branch to reach, to grab hold of, to save me...just blackness and nothingness...

Even their noxious smell disappeared. Then falling... falling...

I heard a scream. My scream...

Shah Wharton enjoys writing short stories and poems, and plans to publish her first novel, a paranormal/supernatural fantasy called Finding Esta – The Supes Series I in 2012. Her favourite genres include anything with fangs, that is dark, and/or that will make her squirm or jump or scream out an expletive. She is an avid Kindle abuser and adores the indie writing community and being part of the e-publishing revolution.

General blog: <http://wordsinsync.blogspot.com/>

Author blog: <http://shahwharton.blogspot.com/>

Twitter: @ShahW1

Facebook: Words In Sync – Shah Wharton



EDWARD LORN

Edward Lorn is an American horror author presently residing somewhere in the southeast United States. He enjoys storytelling, reading, and writing biographies in the third person.

Connect with Edward -

@EdwardLorn

www.edwardlorn.com

<http://edwardlorn.wordpress.com>



"Monsters are real. Ghosts are real, too. They live inside us, and sometimes, they win."

~Stephen King

Officer Mack Larson is not everything he appears...

When twelve-year-old Trey and his best friend Eddy play a prank on Officer Mack, the resulting chain of events rocks the small town of Bay's End.

Today, Trey Franklin is a man haunted by his past. Tormented by that one tragic, fateful summer, Trey searches for catharsis the only way he knows how - by writing.

A tale of love and loss, bittersweet memories, and the depths of human evil.

Welcome to Bay's End.

**Bay's End is now
available on Amazon.com**

BAY'S END

EDWARD LORN



THE BREAK Kalla Monahan

It was just another normal day in Arm. Humerus was minding his own business, doing the same job that he did each and every day; up and down, forward and backward, twisting left and twisting right. Muscles and Tendons assisting him along. His function was essential and his actions routine. Humerus' job hadn't changed as far back as he could remember. He felt secure and invincible wrapped up with Muscles and Tendons and Tissues in Arm.

Suddenly there was a strange sensation, one that Humerus had never felt before. It was similar to some of the other movements he routinely performed but something was off. Muscles and Tendons did not move as they normally did. Now they were different, tense, and unfamiliar. The pressure made him move outward, not knowing what else to do but moving in time with his colleagues in the moment.

CRACK!

Humerus was rudely wrenched out of alignment; Tendons snapped in confusion, Muscles contracted and stepped out of line. At that moment, Tissues tore as one jagged edge of Humerus was exposed to the world outside of Arm.

The unfamiliarity of this new world was confusing. The physical pain was intense, much worse than when Osteoblasts had helped him to elongate and fused Epiphyses to him. The emotional trauma was frightening and immobilizing; Humerus was exposed and he felt very alone in this strange new world. The sensations that passed over his jagged edge were horrifying. All he wanted to do was go back to Arm, to leave this new world behind. He could tell he was an outsider here; everything that touched him only caused more pain, pain that travelled back through him and into Arm.

As pain flooded his senses, he felt his jagged end moving through this scary new land. Pain, like none he ever felt before pushed his senses past the breaking point. Every movement sending a shock wave of awareness through his length; the new environment almost burning his exposed surface in intensity.

Unexpectedly there was pressure and tension in Tissues that surrounded him. He could sense communication going on around him, felt it as it radiated up his core starting at his jagged edge. He didn't understand what any of it meant; this new world had a very different language from the one spoken in Arm.

His jagged end started to move; his colleagues were pulling him back from the alien world! Soon he was back in Arm, silently rejoicing that he was whole again. Nestled back into proper alignment, Humerus was visited by Osteoblasts who set to work, helping him to heal. As Humerus let Osteoblasts stitch away, he was oblivious to the work that was being done to seal Arm from the strange, terrifying world just beyond its borders.

~

Kalla Monahan is sassy but quiet, preferring to use her writing talents to showcase other authors. As the Publicist for Sirens Call Publications, she is slowly coming out of her shell and allowing others to read her fiction and poetry. Kalla's literary loves include horror, science fiction and the truly bizarre. She has an extreme soft spot for survival fiction and you will likely find her devouring one of the many great offerings in that genre between reading submissions. Her favourite books include, but are not limited to *Seeing* by Jose Saramago, J.D Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, *Labyrinth* by Kate Mosse, Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Forest House*, and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum.

Connect with Kalla on Twitter at @KallaMonahan, via email at Kalla@SirensCallPublications.com, on Facebook (Kalla Monahan). Don't forget to check out her blog The Bizarre Kaleidoscope at bizarrekaleidoscope.wordpress.com

The Sirens Call

February 2012
Premiere E-Zine
cover price \$2.99



Featuring:

Short Stories of Horror
and Flash Fiction
from Indie Authors
around the globe.

Original Art Work
& Photography

An interview with
the author of
"Days with the Undead"
Julianne Snow

A peek into
the Editorial minds of
those of us at SCP!

www.SirensCallPublications.com

*The Sirens Call
bi-monthly eZine
is available for a
yearly
subscription fee
of \$10, or an
individual issue
cost of \$2.99
each.*

To celebrate the launch of our
inaugural issue, you can pick up your
first year's subscription for the
reduced price of \$6 throughout
February and March 2012.

www.sirenscalepublications.com

All Funds Stated Are USD

An Interview with Julianne Snow

We sat down with Julianne Snow, author of Days with the Undead, in order to find out a little more about what makes her tick, how she grew up and what fuels her passion to write. The following is what transpired..

SCP: Lets start out by asking what kind of environment you grew up in, what you were like as a child, and how you developed your desire to write.

JS: Are you sure you're prepared for this? You're nodding so I'm going to assume that's a yes...

I grew up in a lower middle class family. It wasn't the easiest of times but it really wasn't the hardest. My parents moved us out of a dangerous suburb of Toronto when I was seven and plopped us in the middle of nowhere. And when I say nowhere, I quite literally mean nowhere. Our house was on the corner of a two-lane highway and a dirt concession road; surrounded by farms, I had quite a lot of time to myself. My brothers were lucky; they had each other to help occupy time. However, I could only spend so much time in the woods playing some game that involved wooden guns and running haphazardly through the webs of gigantic garden spiders while trying to evade capture. (I can still hear the screams of my brothers as they found themselves plastered with sticky web and a particularly large specimen hanging onto their face for dear life. Can you blame me for not wanting a piece of that?!)

Instead I chose to read; and when I say read, I mean anything that I could get my hands on. I was one of those kids that was blessed to not have to study for tests so I spent a lot of my time reading. It was an easy way to pass the time when there wasn't much else to do. We didn't have cable so TV was delivered via the antennae attached to the side of our house; it was great in the winter, we could get channels from as far away as Buffalo but in the summer we only fuzzily got the local Canadian stations. The funny thing was that the Francophone stations came in perfectly all year round, but it wasn't as much fun to sit there and translate what you were watching. I still loved *Ananas* however. As a result of our limited channels, I grew up on *Dr. Who*, *The Edison Twins*, *Read All About It*, *Fables of the Green Forest* along with a few others. Not that I watched much TV, I loved reading. At an early age, I discovered my imagination and once I did, there was no going back.

I watched my first horror movie at four, thanks to my well-meaning parents. It was *Alien*. And I'd have to say that I lasted longer than both of my older brothers. If you listen to my parents tell the story, you'll likely hear that I "snuck" down to watch the movie but that is totally untrue. Neither of my parents had seen the film so they had no idea what they were exposing us to. My brothers both lasted to about the part where the embryo-laying spider with a tail attached itself to Kane's face. (I remember the screaming and their haste to get out of the room; perhaps that's part of the reason that none of us appreciate our eight-legged friends...) I lasted up until the point that Brett walked into the room with all of the chains hanging from the basement while looking for Jonesy. Once that alien came down the chains and grabbed Brett, I was outta there! And my fertile imagination helped to turn every unknown shape into one of those acid-bleeding aliens. But out of that fear, a healthy love for horror was born.

Once I learned to read, I devoured books by Stephen King, Robin Cook, Christopher Pike, Dean Koontz along with Marion Zimmer Bradley, C.S. Lewis, L. Frank Baum, J.R.R. Tolkien and

Ray Bradbury. And that's just to name a few. Looking back now, I call it research. My imagination was expanding at an exponential rate; absorbing the words and translating them into fantastical scenes and landscapes in my head. I tell you, I could really live inside the world that my mind is capable of envisioning with a few well-crafted sentences. I wrote a lot while in middle and high school. I wrote at the speed that I read and none of it was likely very good. I wasn't very careful with grammar or my words; I wrote to get the ideas out of my head.

I stopped writing for a long time after a teacher that I respected told me that I was better suited to scientific endeavours and not writing. Looking back at my writing of those years I can certainly see why they would have said that; since I saw all of the scenes happening in my head as I wrote, I hadn't taken the time to carefully and passionately craft them with words. It was my mistake and one that rarely happens anymore. At the moment words are quite literally weapons for me; I want them to strike you, to penetrate your mind, and to leave you gasping for air. It's been only recently that I started to write again. It all came about during a life-threatening illness which caused me to re-evaluate my life and what I really wanted out of it. Writing became my cathartic escape and once I was doing it again, I wondered why I'd ever stopped. Silly teacher, what do you know anyway... The main thing is that I have rediscovered my passion. Nothing has ever made me happier.

Okay, so I'm a little long winded, but you did ask...

SCP: Why do you write about Zombies?

JS: Why do I write about Zombies; good question. I absolutely love works related to Zombies. I thrive on apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic themes. My love of Zombie culture was born at six when I watched the 1968 black and white *Night of the Living Dead*. Romero's film is brilliant and to my young mind, it was perfect. I still think it is. I watched all of the movies that I could possibly get my hands on that related to the Zombie mythos. Some were good; others didn't quite hit that mark for me. While I was in University, I discovered that people also wrote about them. It sounds silly saying that, but I was consumed with my love for forensics and crime thrillers at that point so I was blind to all else it seemed. Once I found them, there was no stopping me. Since then, I have attempted to read all that is written. When I got ill, I couldn't read as I was almost blind for a period close to two years. My imagination took over and I started to develop *Days with the Undead*. They say to write what you know and I know Zombies. I painstakingly wrote the first book with my limited vision for NaNoWriMo 2010 and it sat in a file on my computer for close to six months. Not sure if it was good enough for publishing, I decided to put it on the web as an experiment; day by day. It's written as a daily journal so posting it on the net each day was a great way to test the waters. I was surprised to find that people responded and responded in a favourably way. Once I got to end of what was the book (which I heavily edited for the web), I had to keep going; my fans were counting on me to keep them entertained. It's been a labour of love and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

SCP: Do you have a favourite Zombie Snack?

JS: Ummm, interesting question... My first answer is no, as I'm not a Zombie myself. (I swear!

You can check me for bite marks and everything, including a pulse!) But if I were a Zombie, I suppose that I would totally crave braaaains! But definitely not liver, it's detestable!

SCP: Since writing *Days with the Undead*, have you felt the need to take any precautions against the possibility of a zombie apocalypse?

JS: To be frank, I always have an escape route planned in the back of my mind. I'm not hoarding food or stockpiling guns and ammunition, but I do have a bug-out bag for regular emergencies that could be easily adapted should the Zombpocalypse occur. If it ever happens, you won't see me waiting around to find out if things are brought under control quickly. I'm getting out. Period.

SCP: Do you have a literary "guilty pleasure"?

JS: I do.

Oh, I suppose you want me to tell you what it is. Okay, lean in real close so that I can whisper into your ear... I love to read Harlequin Romances from the 1970s. They're short, easy to devour in a single reading, and they satisfy my desire for a little romance every now and again.

SCP: How do you feel when someone writes a positive/negative review?

JS: I haven't actually had a review, positive or negative yet. I have received feedback on my web series but anyone that leaves a comment has been favourable so far. In my mind, I like to think that I would be gracious in receiving both kinds of reviews. Negative reviews can only enlighten a writer. And you have to remember, that not everyone is going to like what you write; to think that is ludicrous.

SCP: What proactive steps do you take to improve your writing?

JS: I think being a reader helps with this. I'm learning more and more about style and syntax as I read which I view as an education. I'm not a classically trained writer by any means; all I can do is learn from my peers and hope that their lessons enrich my own writing. I've also been thinking about taking a Creative Writing class though I'm not sure that I can manage one with my hectic schedule. In addition, I find that as I read through the suggested edits of my work, that I make the same types of mistakes often. As a result of becoming more aware of them, I can identify when not to repeat them.

SCP: What do you perceive your writing style to be?

JS: With *Days with the Undead*, I'm very much a pantsier. I don't have a specific plan in mind while I write it. The story is about five and a half months in and I really have no idea what's going to happen next. Obviously there are small story lines that play out over a number of days and posts but once those are resolved, it's no holds barred. For some of the other things that I have written I'm a planner. I like the structured approach of a set plot line, of developing my characters ahead of time, and of deciding where the story will end.

SCP: All time and other restrictions lifted; what would you write?

JS: Oh, that's a hard question! There is so much that I want to write... I have tonnes of ideas and stories planned out for a point in time when I can sit down to write them. I have a novel idea developed right now and I just haven't had the time to devote to it with my schedule. If I could, I would sit down, tune out the world and write it.

Lastly, we would like to thank Julianne for her time. It was great to sit down with her and discuss the state of things in her literary world.

Kate, Nina, and Kalla - the lovely ladies of Sirens Call Publications

Our next issue of *The Sirens Call* will feature an interview with
Kate Monroe, author and editor.



Julianne Snow

It was while watching Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* at the tender age of 6 that solidified Julianne's respect of the Undead. Since that day, she has been preparing herself for the (inevitable) Zombie Apocalypse. While classically trained in all of the ways to defend herself, she took up writing in order to process the desire she now covets; to bestow a second and final death upon the Undead.

As the only girl growing up in a family with four children in the Canadian countryside, Julianne needed some form of escape. Her choice was the imaginations of others which only fostered the vibrancy of her own.

Days with the Undead: Book One is her first full-length book, the basis of which can be found in her popular web serial of the same name.



Contact Julianne at:

@CdnZmbiRytr

FaceBook: Julianne Snow

cdnzmbirytr@hotmail.com

<http://dayswiththeundead.com>

<http://theflipsideofjulianne.wordpress.com>

Julianne's short *The Living Dead of Penderghast Manor* can be found in the ***Women of the Living Dead*** anthology available on Amazon



It's a journal of survival.

Five people set out to escape the Undead who have risen too close to home.

Join the emotional and physical struggle as they began on the third day after the awakening of Brooks VanReit, as they are recorded from the point of view of Julie, a former pathologist and part-time survivalist.

Each entry is geared toward helping those who want to help themselves and maybe give a few that don't a swift kick in the ass. Join our group of survivors on their journey through these Days with the Undead.

Available on Amazon late February 2012

Credits

Contributing Authors

(in order of inclusion)

Colin F. Barnes - *The Trapper*
Nina D'Arcangela - *Ripping*
Julianne Snow - *The Bermuda Dimension*
Robert Ropars - *The Propagation*
Edward Lorn - *What The Dark Brings*
Kate Monroe - *Shades of Grey*
Kimber Vale - *Mental Floss*
Alex Woolf - *A Kindle For Christmas*
Shah Wharton - *The Dead Party*
Kalla Monahan - *The Break*

Contributing Artists

(in order of inclusion)

Dark Angel Photography (Nina D'Arcangela)
Eddie Rotten & Jennifer Howser
Irene Snow

Featured Author Interview

Julianne Snow

Editorials

(in order of inclusion)

Sirens Call Publications
Nina D'Arcangela
Kalla Monahan
Kate Monroe

Other Advertisements

Adorkable Designs - Book Cover Designs by Jack Wallen

Advertisements Created by SCP Designs

Twisted Realities: Of Myth and Monstrosity
Childhood Nightmares: Under the Bed
Cities of Hell Chronicles Vol. 1 (Anachron Press)
Days with the Undead: Book 1
Robert Ropars
Edward Lorn
Kate Monroe
Joseph A. Pinto
Julianne Snow

Subscriptions for *The Sirens Call*
Submissions for *The Sirens Call*

Our Sincerest Thanks to Everyone that Made *The Sirens Call* Possible