

*Short Stories*

# Ramblings<sup>of</sup> a Lucid Madman



**BOBBY W. LEE**

## Short Stories by Bobby W. Lee

Bobby W. Lee

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A collection of short stories and poems

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Why do you read? Someone asked me this once and I was instantly dumbfounded. How does one explain, I thought. So I sat and thought about it in great depth. What I came up with to simplify all the reasons into a nutshell was that reading takes you out of yourself and yet into yourself! Confused? If you don't love to read then, probably so. Everyone is different so I will try to explain my personal reasons. Reading turns on the switch to my imagination which is like a time machine. It can take me anywhere I let it. My subconscious mind provides the props and angles and the movie plays out in my conscious mind. The script is transferred through my brain by way of my eyes and there you have it, living technicolor action. Hey, it works for me! Not every writer can trip the switch but when I find one who does I read savagely, like a drowning man fighting to grab a life raft! I have been known to walk through a library pulling an interesting looking title here and there, scanning a few paragraphs and rejecting or keeping till I have eight or ten keepers and then devouring them in a few days. Nowadays it's like my dreams have come true with Ebooks and I feed on them like a shark on a school of fish. Don't get me wrong, I love a good movie! But I'll take a good book over them anyway, my imagination as I read far surpasses anything Hollywood can toss my way! I don't know if any of you feel like this, but I have a good hunch a lot of people are like me. Nothing beats a good book and when you finish it you want more, more, more! This love has led me to write and I hope somewhere someday my work affects someone the same way the great authors I have read and loved affected me. It's a marvelous world that is yours alone in how you interpret a book, a super personal experience like nothing else. Here are a collection of my short stories so far, they are what they are. You be the judge, my job is to entertain and I hope to hit that mark. Best Wishes, Bobby W. Lee

### The Cave

Pink amid orange swirled with pale blue and gauzy white streaked the sky as dawn faintly

painted the morning's canvas above. Bream made feeding rings in the small pond beside the alabaster stepping stones leading across it. Shimmering dew drops clung to the leaves and pine needles. A lone hawk soared above the tall oaks in search of a morning rabbit to feed its young nestled high in a tall pine. The world was coming to life with the arrival of the new day's sun. A faint breeze stirred, faintly scented with pine and honeysuckle fragrance, drying the dew. The young vampire sat watching till his skin began to steam from the sun's early rays then rushed back into the cave that had been his sanctuary the past few months. Gaining the cool dark confine of the cave he savored the image and remembered what it had been like to be human. To walk in the sunlight feeling the warmth on his face and the rich nutty brown it had turned his skin in the summers, the feel of sweat popping out on him as he had worked in the fields, the hum of June Bugs and bees flying to and fro. He sighed heavily. That was all behind him now, the night was his life sharing her dark secrets as he wandered, moving from village to village slaking his horrible thirst. He had been nearly caught and killed at first, the blood lust making him sloppy and careless, but he had learned caution and stealth stealing a single victim at a time instead of rushing in like a wolf in a sheep pen. He had wiped out a whole village right after being turned, killing right and left, the killing madness on him as he chased down the ones who tried to run. He hadn't fed till every last man woman and child lay dead. Then bloody and spattered with gore he gorged himself on blood, sleeping through the day in one of his victims huts, sheets pulled over the windows. A neighboring villager came to buy chickens that day walked onto the horrible scene then ran all the way back to his village for help. They had arrived with swords and pitchforks and started searching the village for survivors, luckily for him they mistook him for a victim. They piled all the bodies (him included) in the big longhouse they used for village meetings and trading. Night was approaching as they rounded up the last of the bodies and set fire to the longhouse. Smelling the smoke and feeling the blast of heat from the approaching flames, he awoke and slipped unseen out a window. He had very nearly been burned and he learned to control the killing madness through practice and began taking single victims in stealth attacks rather than the frenzied slaughter of the first village. He became an expert at stalking and picking off villagers that strayed out of sight of the others. Silently he killed and dragged the bodies off into the woods scratching leaves and dirt over them and ripping out chunks of flesh to make it appear as if a cougar or bear was the culprit. From village to village he moved, taking one or two here and there. Still young in his vampirism, he hunted to survive. Some nights he would play on the stones crossing the pond running back and forth across them at dizzying speed, then walk them on his hands, cavorting like a young foal in the moonlight. This was his place, where he always came back after his roaming sprees. It was secluded and beautiful and he longed to roam it in the daylight.

He lay sleeping in his cave, dreaming of playing by the pond in the daylight amid the flowers and tall weeds. He never heard the grim party of villagers with their sharp sickles and wooden stakes as they silently crossed the stones leading across the pond to the small path leading up to the cave. Entering the cave one man accidentally knocked over a small rock leaning just inside the mouth. Just a small click but he heard it like a boulder crashing through a thicket. Instantly he was awake and aware! Smelling the fear coming off the villagers in pungent waves. He sprang from the wooden coffin sitting in the small cavern to the left of the large main cavern and as they were lighting the torches he took them from behind. Silently and swiftly he killed all five before they ever knew he was even close by. Slaking his thirst he retired back to the coffin to wait for night's release. When it came he took all the bodies out of the cave and weighting them with stone he sank them in the little lake. Standing beneath the weeping willows he thought for a long time. Then silently he ran to the village and like a marauding tiger killed every last man, woman, and child. Working quickly to beat the dawn he piled all the bodies into the chapel and after dousing it with kerosene he found by the mill set it ablaze. He waited as long as he dared to make sure the flames were going strong enough to complete the job then rushed back to his beloved cave. No one was going to take his home! He would kill them all if they came! He sat watching the sun rise until his skin began to smoke then went back to the little coffin to sleep the day away and dream of playing in his beloved home in the sunlight.

Bobby W. Lee

## Tick Tock

He sat there. He could do nothing else, his once powerful proud Mustang was now twisted ravaged metal and plastic wrapped around him. He had hydroplaned running about 80mph on a lonely road in Mississippi coming home to Atlanta from the casino. He felt blood running down his chest and back, a small hot tickle in contrast to the burning in his neck where a shard of windshield protruded at a crazy angle. The blood oozed around the glass welling up on his shoulder then trickling down, his heart pumping it slowly out of him. Only an increment at a time but the jugular was nicked and without help it was only a matter of time. He didn't know, all he knew was that he was trapped. He was pinned in his seat like a fly caught in a spider's web. He knew he hurt in several places but he couldn't check himself. The passenger seat was folded over onto his right side pushing him into the crushed in driver's door. The steering wheel had snapped off and the column was shoved into his ribs on his left. He couldn't tell if he was impaled or if his ribs were just broken. He couldn't feel his right arm at all but he could wiggle all his toes and all the digits on his left so he doubted he had spinal injury. His head had hit the windshield and throbbed something awful and he could feel blood drying on his face. "No haircuts for a while!" he thought then laughed insanely, the pain in his side and chest racking him. Pushing the pain down inside him to his core he squirmed and struggled for a few seconds but it was useless. Tears welled in his eyes as the pain re-consumed him and at his helplessness. There was no way he was getting out of this without help. If he concentrated he could think above the burning waves of pain but the jolts that came every so often scrambled his thoughts and made his muscles jump involuntarily. He looked around using only his eyes to find something, anything to help him but even if there had of been it would be of no use to him. The seatbelt and wreckage had him clamped firmly. He could only see the demolished interior and the trunk of the large oak the Mustang had stopped against in the early morning light. "Surely someone will come along!" he thought but in the back of his mind he knew the odds were heavily against him. He wondered how far off the road he was and tried to remember what happened but could not get past the car lightening up and going sideways. "Help me!" He shouted as loud as he could in his sorry state, knowing he ought to save his breath and that there was no one to hear him! Panic set in and he screamed till he was hoarse ignoring the waves of pain. Sobbing now he muttered, "Please God, somebody help me." he blacked out for a few seconds it seemed and when his eyes opened he recognized a pungent smell, gasoline! "No, no, no, this can't be happening to me!" he thought. He had so many things to live for, a good job, money in the bank, a promising future with his fiancé! "God, I'd trade it all right now if I could just get out of here!" he thought sobbing. "Really!" the voice was real and right in front of him! He flinched and opened his eyes. Sitting on the crumpled fender one leg out straight and the other bent with his hands clasped around the knee was a man. Thirtyish with streaks of grey in his temples, medium length black hair, a sharp prominent nose, with thin lips curled in a sardonic smile. He had not heard him come up but in his state that wasn't so strange he thought. "Help me! He croaked. "Well that depends," said the well dressed stranger, hopping off the fender and walking around to peer through the hole in the spiderwebbed windshield at him. "Are you really ready to trade all that to leave here?" Not thinking that he had never uttered a word out loud, He croaked "Yes!" he shut his eyes and braced himself, knowing that any movement was going to hurt terribly. A few moments went by and nothing happened. He opened his eyes and the stranger's face was only an inch or so from his. He could feel his warm breath on his skin and their noses were almost touching. "Are you really sure that's what you want, I wouldn't want to twist your arm or anything!" the stranger said his grey eyes staring into his own intently. The stranger abruptly threw back his head and laughed long and hard! "He's insane," He thought. "I'm being rescued by a madman!" The stranger picked at a nail on his left hand with his right thumbnail, "Well?" The stranger cupped his chin in his hand, first finger curled over his top lip and thought about it for a minute. "Why not, he said, Why not indeed!" With that he jerked the driver's door off the side of the mangled car causing it to rock a little, sending excruciating waves of pain through the trapped victim. He lost sight of him as the stranger walked around the back of the car. The car rocked again as the stranger ripped the passenger door off the hinges and tossed it over his shoulder as if it were a ball of paper. "This is not right!" He thought through the haze of pain as the stranger ripped the passenger seat from the rails in the floorboard and sent it sailing after the door. He blacked out and when he came to he was on his back, staring up into a blue autumn sky with wispy cotton candy clouds floating over. His neck

burned horribly and his ribs felt crushed and broken, every breath a symphony in pain. But it was nothing compared to the burning pain creeping down his neck and starting to flow through his body. His eyes opened again and the stranger was standing above him at the top of his head looking down at him. "You can scream ,it's okay, we all do when it starts taking hold. No shame in it ,just let it rip!" he said. His eyes burned with a queer light. "A few more seconds and you'll start to feel it happening ,try not to fight it, it's a little easier that way. It still hurts like hell though! That's it ,just breathe deep ,it will all be over soon and you'll feel better!" he tried to concentrate on the face above him but the burning became molten and coursed through him in agonizing jets, his traitorous heart pumping it onward. He screamed and thrashed and screamed some more! Then it felt like a cold bubble around him shrinking inward dissipating the heat and freezing him through and he screamed until he blacked out. "Easy ,easy !"He heard through the frozen mists, .then everything went black. He floated in the mists with the feeling of height, sailing like a hawk ,peering downward not knowing what he was looking for but elated with no pain only joy and exuberance washing over him knowing he was flying. Then something snaked through the mists below him, He dodged but couldn't escape the blood red arrow with the small line hooked to it. It struck his breast but there was no pain, only a tugging sensation. The line tightened and started pulling him downward, slowly at first then rapidly. He plummeted through the icy mists downward into the blue and toward the green and brown earth rising to meet him. A body lay beneath and he fell into it with a sickening crunch as it enveloped him. His eyes flew open and once again he was staring at the blue autumn sky with the wispy clouds above. The pain was receding in waves liken to cymbals being struck repeatedly with whisks. He felt a cold strength pour through his body and he moved first his fingers and then his toes. Gasping for air, He sat up! The stranger stood a few yards away. "About time, He said, I thought maybe my aim was off a little. But I see it's you after all!" he looked around himself taking gulps of air to quiet the hammering of his heart and clear the fog from his brain. A short distance away the Mustang sat flattened into the oak, debris scattered everywhere. "Where am I, what happened?" he asked bewildered ,jumping lightly to his feet. "Don't worry about that right now, things will come back to you but don't try to rush it. It's enough to know you belong to me and we have things to be done. Give yourself a few minutes to get yourself together then we have to go."The stranger said with a not so pleasant smile. Who are you? "he asked. "Oh I think you know that one! "The stranger replied and this time the smile was pure evil as the strangers pupils narrowed to slits like a cats.

Bobby W. Lee

### The Rock

The old man sat thinking about what had happened. Skirting the razors edge between sanity and madness. He had lost everything he held dear in this world. Every loved one gone to dust or deserted him. It didn't matter anymore. The old man had lived long enough that to go on was only a redundant cycle of meaningless chores. He served no purpose for anyone anymore other than his own agenda. His body was failing him growing weaker every year that passed but his mind was ever active. Too active. He found he slept less and less and thought more and more. He'd lie awake reliving his past and thinking of the things he could have done, should have done ,till he would realize the sun had come up and he would rise ,shower ,dress himself and make his coffee. Never breakfast ,hedetested eating but one meal a day. That was enough to sustain him and keep his heart beating. He would pass the day muttering to himself and walking through the empty house surrounded by his material things that mattered naught to him now. He decided that he was an island, or rather a rock poking above the sea with the waves crashing onto him day after day, slowly but surely eroding him away into sand on a beach somewhere. His faith in humanity was long gone and anyone who tried to talk to him or visit, he sent on their way with a barrage of cursing! "Don't bother me, I'm busy!" he would scream at them. After a while no one even tried and he was left alone, the people around town saying he was crazy as a "Betsy Bug". He didn't care, he had no time for their drivel. He was oblivious to them most of the time what few ventures he made into town to pick up what meager supplies he needed. His truck sat in the driveway, the tires gone flat. He didn't care, he didn't drive it anymore. He had parked it fifteen years ago when he came home from the funeral and it had sat there ever since. The inside of the house was the same, the only things moved were in the bedroom, bath, and kitchen where he spent his time. Everything else was just as it was fifteen years ago ,just covered in more dust. No matter, wasn't being used anyway. No time for such

nonsense as that. The waves beat down and he held his ground ,slowly slipping away. No matter. Once a week he would walk to the cemetery on the other side of town. He would visit a certain grave and sit there on the grass for a while,muttering to himself, then abruptly get up and hobble back home. The kids around town were scared of him and would scatter when he came by. They would hide and throw rocks at him sometimes striking him in the back or hips. No matter. He would shout at them something unintelligible and give them the gnarled finger over his head, never stopping. He barely felt it anyway, his brain churning with activity. He didn't have time for trivial crap like that, he was too busy. His evening meal consisted of either chicken noodle soup or spaghetti-o's, one or the other for fifteen years now. Coffee was to him like water and he drank it almost continuously. It was his main expense. He burned very little electricity, he didn't use the lights anymore, and the propane tank still sat half full fueling only the pilot lights, he didn't run the heat anymore either. He scarcely felt the cold anymore and when he did he pulled up a thin ragged blanket around him. Lost in his own thoughts he was busy and didn't have time for meaningless crap as the waves beat down upon him washing a little more of himself away every day. The mailman had started leaving just the electric and gas bills as this was the only thing the old man would take out of the mailbox anyway. He watched in his mirror every day as the old man hobbled out to the box and his heart was sad for the man. He tried to make conversation several times but the old man would curse him vehemently so after a while he just stopped trying and just checked every day to make sure the old man was okay and not lying in there dead or something. He would pull down a house or two and wait to see the old man come out. He had a charitable heart and worried about the old skin flint. Twice he had his wife to make apple pies and he would leave them on the doorstep, but the next morning they would still be there and the old man ignored them. He racked his brain with ways to approach the old man but every attempt was met with the same reaction and the mailman didn't want to agitate the old man into a heart attack or anything so he quit trying and just went back to watching. One morning two young Jehovah witnesses were coming up the street as the mailman sat waiting for the old man and the mailman was curious as to how this would work out so he watched closely as they approached the old man's door and knocked. The screen above their heads blew out from the shotgun blast and the two ran for their lives. The mailman couldn't help but chuckle even though he knew it was wrong. A few minutes later the old man came out minus the shotgun and hobbled to the box like nothing had ever happened, got his mail and hobbled back. The mailman thought about it all day and discussed it with his wife when he got home from making his rounds. She pointed out that the old man might have missed accidentally and that the next time someone knocked it might not turn out so well. The mailman doubted the old man meant to shoot them or they would probably be scattered across the yard but he worried that his wife might be right so he dropped by the Sheriff's office and told one of the deputies on duty about the incident. The deputy said he would check it out and that he would give the old man the benefit of the doubt and just talk to him about it. The mailman was relieved and felt good about doing his civic duty. He went on about his rounds and then went home to his wife and waiting supper. He was in the shower when he heard his wife yelling for him to come here and watch this. He threw a towel around himself and walked to the living room where his wife was glued to the T.V. "Oh my God!" She said, tears streaming down her face. He looked to the screen and saw that the police had a house surrounded and was waiting for the SWAT team to arrive. Suddenly it sank in, it was the old man's house! He sank down in his chair and put his face in his hands. "What have I done?" he asked to no one in particular.

The old man was drinking coffee lost in his thoughts. The waves were crashing down and there was only a small piece of rock left. Someone banged on his door hard and hollered something at him. He stood up, shotgun in hand preparing to shoot the top of the door again when someone kicked in his door and ran toward him. The old man reacted and blew the deputy back onto the porch. The old man muttered and cursed, he didn't have time for this kind of foolishness! The waves crashed down washing the last little piece of rock away to become sand on a beach somewhere. The waves turned into tiny pinpoints of red light bouncing everywhere and the old man stood up,shotgun still in hand, and smiled.

Bobby W. Lee

## Chance Encounter

The damp woods were silent except for the sound of crickets singing in four/four time. Nothing looked familiar, this was not his neck of the woods. He must have strayed far from his usual haunt. He rolled over and got up, brushing the damp leaves and forest loam from his scratched, scabby, and naked body. He looked at the sky, estimating it to be around 8 or 9. He hated when this happened, he had no idea of how far he had roamed or how to get back to the hollow tree he stowed his clothes in. His nose, keen as a wolf, was human now and no use to him. All he had now was human attributes other than strength, speed, and stamina so he put the latter two to work for him and trotted toward the rising sun. It was as good a direction as any.

Coming up a hill, he came out onto a two lane black top, right seemed a good choice so he trotted that way looking for a familiar sign. She came around the curve running way to fast, texting her Mom, letting her know she was headed back from her vacation in Canada. She made the curve barely and slowed a little, dividing her attention between the cell and her driving. Normally she was a lot more responsible but she was tired and driving through the wilderness for such a long time made her careless. She topped the hill glancing at the cell, when she looked up there was a naked man in the road running! "Oh Shit!" Instinct made her foot jam the brake pedal and the old Cutlass Supreme lurched sideways, rubber screaming and smoking, and began to spin around and around. He heard the full throated growl of a big block coming behind him and started veering for the white line and shoulder. He realized at the last second it was flying and at the first sound of rubber he dove into the ditch, the back end of the Cutlass barely missing him as it spun past in a cloud of blue smoke and rubber dust. It caught traction and jerked around to a stop pointing back in the direction it had come, smoke billowing past it for several yards, curlique lines of black on the asphalt trailing it's path. "Oh Shit that was close!" Looking around for something to cover himself, he jumped up and sprinted to a bush growing just off the shoulder and ripped a brushy limb off, holding it in front of him. Scrambling back up the shoulder he ran to the vehicle to check on the passenger. She sat in shock, adrenaline still coursing through her body in electric waves, face white and drawn! For a minute she didn't even realize the man was at her window, saying something. "Are you okay?" ,finally reached her ears sounding tinny and distant through the glass and roaring of blood coursing through her. He was staring at her with warm brown eyes that reminded her somewhat of her Mom's chocolate lab. She cranked down the window on the Cutlass. "What, oh I'm okay, what the hell Dude, do you always run down the middle of the road naked!" she snapped, more mad at herself than anything. "I almost creamed your ass!" Grinning sheepishly, he broke the stare looking downward and muttered, "Sorry, got drunk last night and some friends thought it would be hilarious to put me out naked in the middle of nowhere." He had used this one many times. "How far to town?" he asked. "Don't know, I'm not from around here, but I got some clothes and towels in the trunk if you're not some deranged psycho or rapist." she said meeting his eye and peering intently. Something about him made her relax her guard and after checking the Cutlass to see if it would crank, hopped out. "No, nothing like that, just your average guy a little hung over, naked and a bit hungry," he laughed with an ear splitting grin. She rummaged around in the trunk and found one of her terry cloth beach towels and tossed it to him. "Hop in and I'll give you a lift into the nearest town, if you behave I might even spring for a teeshirt and a pair of shorts." He wrapped the towel around himself and said, "Thanks, I'll pay you back." She grinned walking to the driver side of the Cutlass, "No need, if it were me in your position, I would hope you would do the same for me. It ain't every day you get to rescue a naked man in the Boonies!" His smile broadened as he got in precariously. She fired up the Cutlass and they headed down the road. The cell buzzed and she checked the text from her Mom, then called her back, explaining the situation and leaving out several details. Mom scolded her about picking up hitchhikers and made her promise to check in every fifteen minutes. "Sorry for all the trouble, my names Mike, by the way!" he apologetically offered. "Sue, no trouble." she flashed a smile at him as she spoke. She liked this soft spoken well mannered guy in spite of the odd circumstances that had thrown them together. She glanced over at him, he was cute she thought in a scruffy kind of way. Those warm brown eyes, thick head of chestnut hair, and roman nose set above full lips. He caught her looking and she blushed and looked away. Smiling to himself he studied her out of the side of his eye. Sandy blond

hair, green eyes that were mesmerizing ,perky little nose, and a slight scattering of freckles across her nose and cheeks gave her a saucy intelligent look. Eye dipping lower he noted her slim shapely figure and long muscled legs, clad in black tank top and brand name blue jean shorts, she was a vision of loveliness. She felt his gaze and blushed even more furiously!

"Morden, straight ahead,ten miles, "She proclaimed when she saw the sign. They pulled in to Morden. She drove until she found the local retailer whipping in a parking spot midway down a lane. Hopping out she leaned back in the door and said,"Medium, right ,unless you want to come in and try something on." "Uh,I think I'll just wait in the car unless you just want the attention!" he quipped. She laughed," Be back in a few." A few minutes later she showed back up with several bags in hand. "I hate to go to this retailer ,I always buy everything except what I went after!" She burst out laughing at the quizzical look that came across his face ,"Don't worry ,I remembered." and tossed him a pair ofcamo shorts and a bright yellow tee with a smiley face in black on the front ,"Just in case you decide to jog!" Mike laughed easily and hopped out pulling the shorts on under the towel .Tossing the towel into the back seat he pulled on the tee, giving her a good look at his muscular torso ."Here," she said and handed him a pair of black flops with the Velcro fasteners,"Barefoot is not the way to go unless you're at home or on the beach!" He thanked her and tried to get an address from her to mail a check, but she would have none of it. He turned to go but she called him back and asked where he lived and how far. He told her and she said,"Look, I don't ordinarily do this but seeing how I almost ran you down, let me take you to lunch and I'll drive you home." He started to decline but wanted to spend time with this fascinating woman. "Okay", he said after a moments thought, "If you'll let me pay you back for the clothes and take you to supper!" "Deal!" she exclaimed and pushed the passenger door open with her foot. They drove until they came to a little diner outside town and went in. He couldn't help but notice her beguiling back silhouette as he followed her in. They took a little table by a window. The young pregnant waitress came up and took their order of burgers and cokes. Through lunch they chit chatted about work, different movies and books, and several other topics. Mike was astounded at the things they had in common and as she paid the check and they left,he realized that this woman had him smitten, he felt like he had known her his whole life. She was having similarideas ,thinking about how intelligent and easy to talk to he was. She made a mental note to make sure he got her address and number. She checked in with her Mom and away they went headed to Mike's place. As they pulled in Mike invited her in to his small but modest home. He showed her where the bathroom was and handed her some towels and a washcloth and told her to make herself at home. When she was in the shower, he went to his study and pulled open the drawer,pulling out a stack of bills. Thinking better of it, he smiled and put them back ,grabbing the checkbook and scribbling out a check. This way, she has my number and address ,he thought. That made him thinkof his clothes and cell, stashed in the woods in the hollow tree. After her shower they sat and talked some more overcoffee ,Mike getting her phone number and home address. They took Mike's truck and went to a local place that served Greek and Italian cuisine. After supper they went to a little bar and had cocktails, enjoying onean others company. The afternoon was waning toward dark when they got back to Mikes. He began to get nervous about the approaching night. No need, after saying their goodbyes and an awkward first kiss, she climbed in the Cutlass. "The next time I see you, Mister, you best be wearing clothes! "She joked as she backed up and pulled out. Mike grinned and waved. After she left, he showered and took care of a few chores. As the sun slipped down to the horizon he slipped on a pair of blue jean shorts and headed to his tree at a slow trot. Three quarters of the way there he stopped, seeing a familiar sight through the tree line out toward the highway. Sue's Cutlass parked off the road in a little clearing beside the road. He glanced anxiously skyward but he still had just a little bit before the moon came up so he slipped quietly to the car and looked around nervously, praying nothing bad had happened. He saw movement up ahead out past the car in the woods close to the creek so he crept up. Keeping cover between him and where he saw the movement he inched forward till a sight made him almost gasp aloud! It was Sue! And for some reason she was pulling down her shorts! At first he averted his eyes thinking she was taking care of a naturecall ,but when she pulled her shirt over her head and started pulling off her bra ,curiosity got the better of him. He crouched and watched. She stripped down completely folding her clothes and undies and placing them in a bag that she pushed under the passenger seat of the Cutlass. She then locked the car and carefully placed the keys in the forkof a small tree maybe thirty yards from the Cutlass. Then she sat down on the ground. The first pains of the change



racked Mike's body and he fought mightily to keep from crying out, then horror struck him as he realized he was way too close to Sue for this to be happening. Facing away from her direction ,he jumped up and started to run to try and put distance between them Behind him she screamed "Stop!" And he ran like he had never run till the pains caught him again and he fell headlong into the dirt winded and changing, no stopping it now! He just hoped it was far enough! Agony racked him again, just a few more minutes now! Something burst out of the brush and ran up tohim ,he could feel it scrutinizing him and he sobbed as he smelt a familiar perfume. Rolling over and looking at her with his dirty tear streaked face, he squinted to focus as the first rays of the moon beamed down and washed over them. "Something about her eyes," he thought as the change came. She laughed full and throaty, then threw back her head and howled as the moonlight brightened and they changed together.

Bobby W. Lee

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### Mega Data

It only took a few seconds,a little bit of static on the screen that would be explained away as a solar flare,or a camera glitch,or any one of a dozen other logical, benign explanations but what it really was, was a message. An inexplicable amount of data shot straight through your eyeballs, if you were unlucky enough to be watching, bypassing the brains natural sorting system and implanting a complicated series of instructions direct into the nucleus of your grey matter! There was no warning and there was no defense, if you were watching t.v. or on a computer, laptop, pad, or whatever, you were infected. Instantaneously with no appeal, no cure, no anything except follow the order to kill or destroy whomever or whatever was downloaded to your cerebral cortex. The bad thing was that the infection for lack of a better term, didn't take away your aversion to do evil, it simply overrode it and no matter how hard you fought it mentally, it inflicted enough pain, paranoia, or instability that it won each time, every time! You didn't even know about it till, BAM, you had done whatever was ordered! It was a global epidemic, the apocalypse had started. Panic and survival mode kicked in across the planet,society broke down into small armed pockets, almost overnight chaos took over as elected officials were killed or went into hiding though a large part of the worlds governing force was eradicated in the first onslaught. Only a small handful of people even knew what had happened. They had been watching for it and when it started they sprang into action nullifying nuclear threats, biological threats, and where they could warning key officials of imminent threat, and taking over key military establishments. It was hard not to depend on the electronic devices the world had come to use to run itself but after several of the New Order commando's lost their lives the rest of us became very adept at improvising diligently. Not doing so resulted in permanent deletion. Our New Order Society consisted of a handful of the smartest computer geeks that ever picked up a keyboard. They had stumbled across the message before it was activated by programs that guessed likely scenario's and figured probabilities. The rest of us were recruits that had enough sense to know to listen to the "smart boys." They planned the missions and we carried them out. We were a hodgepodge made up of Army Rangers, Navy Seals, CIA, FBI, and a few other agencies. This was a war we could ill afford to lose, but first we had to figure out who it was at the top of the evil we were against! We knew the cause, but the goal and who was behind it eluded even the smartest of our Brainiacs. All we could do was try to nullify as much of the threat as possible and wait for V.D.( Villain Dog our pet nickname for the unidentified culprit) to make a move. There was little way of knowing where the next threat was coming from because the enemy was anyone from anywhere, it could be anyone from a child to a little old lady. If they (anyone) showed signs of hostility, we wasted them pure and simple. Innocents were killed sometimes but there was simply no way to tell who was just just fed up and pissed off and who was a real weapon of destruction so to be fair we wasted anyone committing violence. We kept a small army busy just disposing of the dead. Not pretty,but vital to survival. Most of the time I was to tired to think or worry

about it, but the few times I did it almost made me crazy so I mentally made it into a video game to distance my mind from the horror of it, I was good at first person shooting games and before this war began would spend hours playing them on the old Xbox I had owned. That seemed ages ago though in reality it had been less than a year since the infection. You just never knew, the lab rats as we affectionately called them, just switched on. They might convulse or roll their eyes to the back of their head, or they might not do anything but get that blank no-ones home stare and then go hell for leather to complete their programmed mission. I had gotten pretty good at spotting them but I took no chances, at twenty two years old I wanted to live, badly! One of my buddies taught me a valuable lesson about survival by getting his brains blown out when he waited to long to see if a young woman was having an epileptic fit or switching on. I never waited after that, freak out around me and I blew you away, no questions asked! At first we spent most of our time defending different key positions but as we stripped the computer systems out and reverted them back to manual operations we started taking the offensive and actively hunting lab rats. Sometimes the Brainiac Boys would send us on covert sniper assignments to take out key targets, how they figured these things out I don't have a clue. I just followed my orders and trusted that these guys knew best. This was my life and till we could break this thing and destroy it whatever it was, it was going to be the only life I had. I had gotten close to a nurse for a while, she took a bullet out of my shoulder for me. She was pretty, brown hair and eyes, a body to die for, and a sweet personality. I was crazy about her. After a couple of dates we made love and I was going to ask her to move in with me but one night she switched on and tried to kill one of the Brainiac Boys. She was blown apart by machine gun fire. I bout went crazy for a while. I won't tell you her name, it still hurts to bad to talk about her. I won't say her name aloud even to this day. So here I am doing what I do, making the best of it. The other day we were at a missile silo de-activating the computer controls and a group of kids came up, I say kids (most were my age) cause I feel a lot older than I really am. Anyway they gathered up and were curious about what we were doing. My Lt tells them to fuck off, nothing to see here and all of a sudden two or three switch on at one time, we wasted the whole lot of them! This was the first time we had seen this, more than one switching on to the same agenda at the same time and place so we reported it pronto to the Brainiac Boys and did several sweeps in that area taking out all the lab rats we could find. A while back we had a close call when one of our trusted soldiers switched on and tried to take out Lt's barrack. One of the guards was alert and took him out with a superb long distance head shot just as he was rushing in Lt's barrack door. We try hard to get each others back. Most of the time we succeed, sometimes we don't like the time a little old lady with a vest full of explosives walked right up to one of our briefings and blew away several officers and some bystanders. We train hard and we're diligent, it helps keep us alive. We use radios and headsets to communicate and we've managed to accumulate aircraft from pre-computer times. As the Brainiac Boys screen and conscript more able bodies our ranks are starting to swell too. Some say this was a one shot deal, others say it is the first step in a coup, in any event we are here pissed off and ready to fight. There's a lot of things unexplained but I leave the daunting task of sorting it all out to those better qualified, my job is a lot better! It's fairly simple, take back what we can and exterminate the lab rats.

Today we are at the Pentagon, some of the Brainiac Boys are gingerly extracting information from the computer banks into printed material which is then packaged and loaded into vans sent to different New Order strongholds to be processed and deciphered. Our job is simple, guard the Brainiacs and help load the vans. We establish a routine for this taking alternating shifts between the eight of us. The day progressed without incident and we started getting ready to move it out. I walked over to an adjacent building to take a whizz and as I was zipping up a blast went off throwing me face down in the dirt several feet from where I had been standing. I immediately secured my weapon and crawled on my belly to cover, a large chunk of concrete thrown from the blast. I made it there and crawled behind it rising to a crouch and peeking around it. I couldn't see anything but some scattered debris, the smoke and dust was still to thick. I tried to hit Lt on the radio but the concussion had wrecked my radio. I waited a few seconds the took nervous peeks around toward the blast site and scanning beyond it trying to locate the hostiles but saw nothing. An eerie quiet had fallen and the only thing I could hear was the pounding of my heart in my chest, my mouth and nose was full of concrete dust with an acrid cordite taste. I blew it out and spit several times clearing most of the gritty substance. The noise of rock hitting rock grabbed my attention and I

peeked back around. Somebody was trying to crawl away from the blast site so I took a deep breath and ran in at a low crouch, weapon at the ready. It was one of the Brainiac Boys, how he had survived the blast was a mystery. He was bleeding out the ears and nose but very much alive though stunned and groggy. I grabbed the back of his coveralls and dragged him through the rubble to my spot behind the chunk of concrete. A telltale puff of dust beside me as I started around alerted me of a sniper's presence. I checked him down for injuries but other than the bleeding he seemed okay albeit stunned and groggy. I warned him about the sniper and told him to stay put as I ran to another chunk trying to draw fire and pinpoint the hostile, adrenaline surging through me. I saw the puff of dust just ahead of me and seconds later I heard the distant crack of the rifle. The sniper was out to my left so using the available cover I moved to the right in a widened circle to come around him. I knew he would be expecting this and I dropped and belly crawled back across to the left using a small drainage ditch for cover. It was risky but I could only hope the sniper was not high enough up to see me and get a shot. I would be easy pickings lying on my belly! I made it out to a stand of trees and circled in from the left. Sure enough the sniper was easing around toward the direction he thought I was coming from, using an abandoned truck for cover. I crept up to within a hundred yards of him, his back toward me. He must have thought about a counter sneak as he started to turn to look back towards my direction but it was too late. I put three rounds into his center mass and when he went down I aimed carefully and put one in his skull. It exploded in a red mist, my AK with its hot loads doing a number on him. I dropped down in place waiting to see if I drew fire but after twenty or thirty minutes I walked up and took the Browning sniper rifle and stripped the corpse of extra ammo. Still cautious I crept back to where I had left Brainiac Boy. He was sitting up behind the chunk rubbing his head still looking a little dazed. I shared a drink with him from my canteen and handed him the AK. I showed him the basics on it. We slipped out and checked the blast site for survivors but the only thing there was useless parts of weapons and scattered body parts. Not a pretty sight, I had grown close to some of those guys but there was nothing I could do for them now except live and get payback. We started out on foot, me leading and Brainiac(I didn't know his name and didn't want to) following a couple of yards behind. At first he had tried to stay beside me but I quickly squelched that notion, no sense both of us getting killed if we drew sniper fire! So a little crestfallen he brought up our rear. I pushed forward till I knew we were well away from the zone, then hunkered down and waited watching our back trail to make sure we weren't being followed. If we were they were damn good, I didn't notice anything suspicious. Luck was with us, I walked up on an old National Guard Armory and after breaking in and looking around came up with radios and headsets and five grenades. The rest of the weapons and ammo had been scavenged already, just luck I stumbled on these lying under some rubble overlooked. Leaving out we were hailed by some local vigilantes but after a brief explanation without key details(they had heard the blast) they let us pass without incident. I slid the pin back in the grenade, put it in my leg pocket and moved us out to a wooded hilltop to camp and call in a dust off.

Lt was KIA so I dialed in the Captains frequency, hit him up and giving a brief sit rep settled in and waited for dawn, the agreed time for the dust off. Breaking out some chocolate bars and jerky I shared a meal with BrainiacBoy washing it down with swigs from the canteen. The Huey came in at dawn, Cap jumped out and as they were loading Brainiac on board de-briefed me and gave me back my AK. They tossed me out a Alice pack and Cap gave me my assignment along with a 9MM Browning equipped with silencer and Pachmyer grips. I was to recon the area and give daily reports. So I saddled up with my gear and waved off Cap and the Huey and double timed it back to a shelled out building close to the Pentagon where I could observe from a distance but in good range for the sniper rifle. I inventoried the Alice pack, food, water, extra ammo, a pair of multi-purpose binoculars(night vision or daytime) a range finder, a black uniform with matching ski mask, yellow smoke grenade, red smoke grenade, and joy of joys; a half pint of Jack! Somebody loved me! I found an old canvas fold out chair across the street from the building and carried it up, I was good to go. I took a pull or two of the Jack then screwed the cap on and secured it in my breast pocket. I settled in getting comfortable in the fold out chair and started scanning the site with the glasses. Nothing stirred and nothing moved. This went on for a couple of days with me reporting in. The third day I had a new Lt to report to so I adjusted to his frequency and reported in. Still nothing, I was getting bored. After breakfast on the fourth day I had action! A beat up Chevy van pulled up a few blocks away and a tall black man, a short crew cut Russian, and an oriental woman got out and

headed over to the site on foot. I radioed in to my Lt but he told me to just observe for a bit. They milled around for a few minutes with the black man pointing and motioning at different spots. My radio crackled in my ear and my Lt excitedly told me to terminate all three, absolutely no survivors! I eased the Browning up and dialed in the scope. Putting the crosshairs right over the black man's right ear, I squeezed one off then swung and put one in the back of Ruskie's neck. Swinging back I desperately searched for the woman in the scope but couldn't find her. I leaned the rifle up and checked with the binoculars but still couldn't find her. This was turning to shit real quick! I picked up the Browning and took out the motor in the van then laid the sniper rifle down and picked up the AK running down the steps of the building and out onto the street keeping cover between me and the site. On the way I gave Lt the sit rep. He came back and told me to take out this target at all costs! Okay, you don't have to tell me twice! I zig zagged to the site keeping my eyes peeled and just as I stuck my head around a building I saw movement. I jerked my head back which saved my life. The bullet meant to take me out striking the wall where my head had just been. I dropped and stuck the AK around the corner firing a couple of rounds without putting my head out to aim. I took a deep breath and sprinted across the opening to my right sliding in beside a curb. She must have ducked back when I had fired the AK, I could see the side of her leg from my new position so I aimed and put a round in it. She dropped like a stone, her Beretta 9mm clattering out into the street. I got up keeping the business end of the AK on her and slowly approached. The grey eyes staring back at me showed no fear! I hit Lt on the headset giving my sit rep. Terminate with extreme prejudice came the order. I raised the AK taking aim. She actually smiled. My finger tightened steadily on the trigger but at the last second I backed off. There was something about her! "Give me a reason not to pull this trigger." I told her flatly. She just shrugged. "Last chance!" I told her. She gave me a look that dripped pure venom! "You people are wrecking the purity of the new world, a world without war and hate and suffering!" Somehow this kinda made sense to me, I motioned her to stay put and walked over and picked up her pistol, checked it to make sure it still worked then slung the AK over my shoulder. Holding her Beretta on her I quickly frisked her and satisfied she had no weapons I shut my headset off. "Who do you work for and what do you mean?" I quizzed her. She studied me with painful curiosity. "Let me stop this bleeding and we might talk." I cut a strip out of my shirt and tossed it to her, she made a tourniquet and wrapped it around her leg above the entrance wound. I fished around in my fanny pack and found one of the morphine needles tossing it to her. She stabbed it in and hit the plunger. Her pupils dilated as the stuff kicked in. I gave her a sip or two out of the canteen and squatted a few feet away tucking the Beretta in my waistband at my back. "What do you know already," she asked quietly. "I don't know shit!" I replied tersely. She laughed, it was beautiful and melodic. "Then you are probably better off for it then, are you sure you want to know?" she asked. "This war started a long, long time ago before we were ever born. When the Nazi invaded Europe during World War II, sacking the museums, churches and monasteries, they found an ancient scroll. It was directions for communicating with an alien race, they just didn't know it at the time. No one really knew what it was. Germany's top scientists worked on it secretly for years and when Hitler died one Nazi scientist took it and all the files with him to Sweden when he fled. There he unlocked the mystery years later and sent a message out to a distant planet. The reply came in the form of a set of directions detailing a way to communicate via computer and satellite. Information was given to this race and they developed their own way to eavesdrop on our world while we were oblivious to them other than a few mishaps (Roswell, for example) and random sighting of their spy craft. The Nazi got wind that NATO was on to his alias and was about to arrest him for war crimes so he destroyed all the evidence a few days before his arrest and took his secret to the grave leaving our world vulnerable and unsuspecting that due to his madness we had hit the top of their charts as a hostile take over with them holding all the aces. What you've been seeing is the softening up of our world for their arrival. You can't stop it and the only thing your people have accomplished is to make it a war instead of an occupation." She had said a mouthful and I sat mulling this over. "If there was no resistance, they had promised to end suffering and war and hunger, now they have to squash your resistance to be able to control the planet. You fools don't know what you've caused!" I put one between her eyes. Cutting my headset on I radioed Lt and requested a dust off. He asked if I had terminated the Tango and I affirmed. The dust off was set for dawn and I set out to pick up my gear. Damn these lab rats! I picked up my gear and weapons and humped out to the LZ to wait for my whirlybird. Now I knew what the Brainiac Boys knew, or at least the gist of it. Villain Dog had an identity now but a fat lot of good it did me. I had no face to place the

name on, just my mental image of what an alien was supposed to look like. At least I knew what I was about to be up against. My chopper came and took me back to my base. After de-briefing I stowed my gear and hit the showers. After chow I hit my bunk and sipped on my bottle of Jack till my eyes got heavy. The next few days were R &R so I put on some civvies and headed out to the beach, swimming and sunbathing while my mind processed all the implications of what the female lab rat had told me. I jogged down the beach loving the feel of the wet sand slapping against my bare feet, then swam in the salty water some more. My body was sweetly sore and my brain was so sharp it shit razors. Returning to the base I checked in with Lt and he informed me we had a briefing with the Cap at 0900 so I went to chow, showered and turned in. Tomorrow was a new day.

Bobby W. Lee

### The Yellow Cat

I was fishing down by the lake in front of my house the first time I saw him, just a yellow Tom moving silently through the woods beside the lake. Nothing apparently unusual about him except he was minus a tail, occurred to meshed disappeared from sight and I went back to my fishing. Two small bass later I headed back up to the house. I put my rods and tackle bag up and took my bass out to the oak stump in the side yard where I usually clean my fish. As I worked, I looked up and noticed the yellow Tom sitting just inside the woods watching me. He looked hungry, his eyes yellow and piercing! I tossed the heads and entrails over his way and took everything to the spigot on the side of the house, washed it all (yes ladies, my hands too!)and headed in. After supper I went out on the deck to smoke and have a cup of coffee. I thought about the cat, but didn't see him anywhere; I guessed he found his way home. I laid myself down and started back reading my new vampire novel. I was a huge fan and read everything by her I could get my hands on! (I couldn't get enough!)Hell, I even went out and bought a French Press and beans and started drinking my coffee like the heroine in my book. Towards the end of the book my eyes started blurring on me and I put down the old I Pad and drifted off to sleep. I tossed and turned nightmaring about demons with yellow eyes. (No more creepy tv series before bedtime) The next morning I woke and stumbled around, making my coffee and almost breaking my prized French Press in the process. I started out the door to load the old paint van (Ford Econoline, the only way to go for a painter!) and there sitting on my deck rail was the yellow Tom. I went back in and searched but the only thing I had that a cat might be interested in eating was a pack of bologna so I split it with him, Hell a man's gotta eat too! I left to go paint and I guess the Tom found himself something to do while I was gone. The day went by fairly quick and the builder brought my check so I knocked off a little early and ran by the bank, cashed my check and went to the retail store to pick up a few things I needed. On the way to Sporting Goods I passed Pets and as an afterthought I turned back, humming a tune from the play "Cats", and picked up a case of cheap cat food and threw it in my buggy. Beggars can't be choosy, right! If I had known then what I know now, I'd have added some rat poison! But hindsight is twenty/twenty my old man used to always say. But I'm digressing, back to the gist. I rang out, headed back to the house and slapped myself on the back for being a "conscientious" man! HellPETA would be proud! Roaring out of the retail store, I cranked up the volume on some vintage Stones and let the good times roll! I was in a good mood, the bills paid, money in my

pocket, and work coming up a plenty! Life didn't get much better than this! Little did I know! I felt so good I swung into the local liquor store walked in and told Odie ,the half-crazy clerk(and a good friend)behind the counter, to give me a fifth of Jack. Hell, I could splurge once in a while! Besides, it would probably last me six months! I ran in a grocery store and picked up some Italian espresso roast beans and I was good to go! I lurched into the drive, parked the old Econoline, hauled my stuff in and put it up then went out on the porch drink in hand and fired up the grill. No cat in sight as I flame broiled my supper and sat down at the stone table on the deck to eat. What the hell I thought as I went back in for condiments and another shot. I popped open a can of cat food and set it by the back door on the deck. Can't stand to see anything go hungry! I finished up supper, cleared the dishes, and poured another shot and went back out on the deck to smoke. There he was, sitting on the deck rail pretty as you please, ol' yellow eyes himself licking his lips and giving me an odd look. I settled in one of the high back swivel chairs and nursed my drink, lighting up a Winston. We just sat there for a while, me looking at him and him looking at me. I took a long pull off my smoke and stubbed it out in the little " Welcome to Gatlinburg "ashtray I had picked up somewhere or another. I knocked out the rest of my Jack, and leaned back studying ol' yeller eyes. He looked like a verse in a Cash song," He looked at me and my blood ran cold, he was big and mean and grey and old", which pretty much summed up the situation. I had heard somewhere that whiskey gives you balls!Totally untrue, there was no way in Hell I was gonna reach over and pet that cat!! Not if I drank the whole bottle!! He looked at me like he knew what I was thinking and I swear I thought I saw him smile! My bladder and common sense finally got the best of me so I headed in and lost myself in what my heroine was up to. I don't know when I fell asleep, but once again my dreams were ravaged by a yellow eyed demon, not the cat but the real deal! Morning found me bleary eyed, hung over, and swearing off reading at night as I fixed my coffee and got ready for work. Heading outside I looked over at the empty can of cat food and replaced it with a fresh one! What can I say, I'm tender hearted. I rolled into work and managed to do a decent job for the day in spite of being tired and having a headache I blamed on the Jack. Quitting time I hurried home and showered up thinking to go fishing, but I made the mistake of sitting down in my recliner to change shoes. I must have been tired. The yellow eyed demon taunted me and laughed at me, he told me what he was going to do to me when he dragged me kicking and screaming to Hell. I couldn't run, fight, or move! I woke up still in the recliner, sweating like a whore in church, asking "Why me, why me?" Needless to say my day was rotten and I left and went home the earliest I had in ten years. I was shot out! I walked down to the lake and fished a while but nothing was hitting so I walked back disgusted." To Hell with this shit!"I thought. I took a quick shower and collapsed on the bed. Once again the demon taunted me! Going into great detail the tortures he had in store for me in Hell, he grinned and snarled! I had had enough; I was pissed, good and pissed! I pulled myself up by the bootstraps and faced him! "What the Hell do you want?!",I screamed at him! He smiled, "Let me show you something." he calmly replied, eyes blazing yellow. My mind played a scene from a movie as he killed everyone and the demon strolled away as a cat. In my mind, it was a yellow cat! And old tune by the Stones was playing in the background and I awoke to it playing from the alarm on my I Pad. I was furious; I didn't even think about it I was so mad! I just went into the bedroom and grabbed my old double barrel twelve gauge off my gun rack, loaded two buckshot in it and walked out to the deck. The old yellow Tom was sitting on the rail and as "God as my witness" he grinned. I cut loose with both barrels.As the fur and smoke settled, a funny looking yellow mist steamed up from the carcass lying in the yard. Slowly it took shape and my worst nightmare walked up to me and said "Thank you!" He was grinning from ear to ear! "Oh shit....."

#### Jesus Loves Bananna Nuts

As they walk me down the corridor to my last farewell,my mind goes back in time,maybe I could have done something differently, I don't know and it doesn't matter now. By the time you read this I'll be long gone but maybe it will help someone somewhere.I found out the hard way why you never look a Demon in the eye.

Two weeks before my discharge from the military I was in a club drinking with my friends celebrating the upcoming event and I got a little overboard as I had not been to chow and my stomach was empty.We drank and drank! I staggered into the bathroom to relive myself. At the urinal beside was some guy drawing weird figures on the wall with a crayon and chanting under his

breath. In the shape I was in, I didn't care what he was doing. I accidentally fell against him on the way out and he pushed me away pointing and chanting, then left. When I staggered out, he was gone, disappearing into the crowd. I joined my buddies and we drank some more. A Senior officer tried to restrain me from dancing on top of the bar and removing my uniform at which I took a grievous offense and declared an unofficial state of war on him. Needless to say, I woke up in the brig hung over and sick, and after sobering up somewhat was transferred to the Psych Ward for observation. They were kind enough to remove my restraints, seeing I was sobered up and no menace, and I flopped down in a chair next to a young officer in a straight-jacket muttering to himself in a rapid tone, to wait and see the shrink. The orderlies

were changing shifts and the one getting off duty gave the other guy the rundown," Just these two to see the Doc so far, him (nodding to me) an evaluation for drunk and disorderly, and him (the officer beside me), poor guy, was studying to be a Chaplain; he tried to read the Bible all the way through in one sitting and flipped out!" They walked away and I looked over to the young guy beside me, probably twenty one at best. His lips were moving furiously and his intelligent eyes were fixed on a spot on the adjacent wall. I strained to hear what he was saying. I made out, "Jesus loves banana nuts." He kept saying it over and over! I shifted my gaze to the Doc's plate glass observation window and tried to ignore the guy. An hour passed and the guy just kept saying it over and over in the same passionate tone. I swear his eyes positively glowed! Two hours had passed now and I was starting to worry about this guy so I turned to him and said "What's your name, sir?" All of a sudden he stopped chanting, his eyes moved first, locking mine in that awful gaze then his head swiveled toward me. I don't know what happened, but I felt like time had slipped or something and I was catching back up. I realized that he was inches from my face screaming those words at me. I instinctively jumped back, turning my chair over and falling on my back and ass. Prepared to fight for my life, I jumped to my feet! The young officer was just sitting there staring at the wall and chanting those words so fast you had to really listen to tell what he was saying. A hand dropped on my shoulder and I spun around ready to cold cock somebody, but it was only the orderly. "The Doc said for you to come in," he said with a big grin knowing he had scared the shit out of me! The Doc asked a few questions then droned on about the military's stance on hitting Superior Officers, yada, yada, yada..... then finally got to the part where the Officer wasn't pressing charges due to my good record and all and I was free to go.

He didn't have to tell me twice. I headed for the barracks, showered and raced to chow. The next few weeks went by smoothly, I got my honorable discharge and that was the end of my military service. I got an apartment in my hometown, got a job, and settled into a gravy life. Over the next year everything went great and I moved up to Assistant Manager over the Front End. I bought a new truck and got engaged to my sweetheart who was an Asst. Mgr. at another store. Life was great!

We had had a real good week, the store was doing great, I came home watched a little T.V., then trundled off to bed after calling my sweetie. Around midnight I woke up sweating and words going round and round in my head, Jesus Loves Banana Nuts! They wouldn't stop! I went downstairs and flipped on the Tube but couldn't concentrate for the racket going on in my brain. I tried everything, I cut the stereo up loud on rock, nope, tried earbuds, nope, cut the stereo up all the way and the T.V. with it, Nope! I stuffed cotton in my ears and took aspirin, nope! Finally I gave up and just listened, the volume of the words eventually decreased to a bearable level and I finally drifted off to sleep for a few hours. I awoke that morning and laid there thinking about that poor young officer I had met in the ward. It was my three days off so I didn't have to be anywhere. It was tough thinking with those words revolving around in the background of my mind continuously but I managed it. The more I thought about it the more I realized the poor guy was trying to tell me something, so I dissected the event over and over and over! Everything before the fight a blank. This went on all day and I fell asleep that night mentally exhausted from worrying about it. The next day was no better and I repeated the routine. My last off day came and still I was no closer to the answer. I exhaustedly went to bed that night. Around midnight I woke again with a startling realization, I wasn't supposed to figure it out, I was supposed to pass it on! And with that the words blasted out in my head like a dam had broken! They were so loud and so fast I could barely hear. I don't know how I managed to get

ready and go to work, but somehow I did it. After futilely trying to take care of my area, I gave up and went to the Managers office in the back and laid my head on the desk. The racket was deafening and I felt my sanity slipping! Mike, the Co.Mgr. on duty came in and asked if I felt okay. I raised my head to tell him "No, not at all," but when I opened my mouth, "Jesus Loves Bananna Nuts" was all that would come out! I screamed it over and over! He didn't say anything else, just stared at me for a few minutes. "We're going to get you some help," he said finally, picking up the phone and calling HR. (Human Resources) "I have a problem here with one of my managers," he said never taking his eyes off me. I couldn't take it any more, I was screaming at the top of my lungs, Jesus Loves Bananna Nuts, and bashed in his skull with my chair. Some associate had the good sense to lock me in the office by locking a chain on the handle and securing it to a steel post, I ranted and raved! I was still screaming an hour later when SWAT took me out in zip ties. At the hospital, they shot me full of something and I fell into a drugged sleep. When I came to in my cell later, those words screaming in my brain, a small thought wormed its way past the cacaphony, it stuck for a moment long enough for my mind to grab it.... maybe I misunderstood what the young officer was trying to say..... the words stopped.....!

Bobby W. Lee

08/23/2012

## THE PATH

Frank walked down to the path leading through the woods to the small dock on the lake in front of his house. The doctor had told him to walk regularly to help his failing heart. At 73 he had a few years left in him if he could lick this heart thing. He had quit smoking a few years back and only drank occasionally. With a little luck he'd have a few more years with Betty, his second wife of ten years.

She was a sweet-natured woman, quick with a laugh and a wonderful cook and Frank knew he was lucky to have her. They had met in Gatlinburg, Tennessee while both on a getaway vacation. Fate saw that they had adjoining rooms and they found each other in the lobby of the motel over the continental breakfast.

Betty had struck up a conversation with him about the native Americans and they became inseparable. Six months later they became man and wife. Frank had taken out extra insurance to make sure she was taken care of if worse came to worse. He passed the dock with its narrow walkway leading to a small platform for fishing and started around the cove making sure to skirt the mud and stay close to the edge of the woods. From somewhere came the plaintive howl of a dog or coyote and the hair on the back of Frank's neck stood up. A short distance later he ran out of dry ground and turned back. Hands in his pockets and head down against the now chilly breeze Frank trudged on. As he got close to the walkway he instinctively looked toward the platform. At first he thought it was a child, but as he came closer he realized it was a young woman squatting on the dock soaking wet, water running from her hair and dress. She looked cold and was pale as alabaster. "Are you okay ma'am?" Frank asked as he hurried out to the platform pulling off his tan Members



Only jacket to cover her with. "Something's not right here!" Frank thought.

Betty was putting cornbread in the oven as Frank went out to walk, "Don't be gone long, supper will be ready in about thirty minutes," she called to his backside. "I won't, love you!" came the answer. "Love you more!" Betty hollered back. She bustled about the kitchen, seasoning her cabbage and checking on the meatloaf. The cat came in from wherever cats hide when they don't want to be found and rubbed against her legs meowing loudly till she finally looked in the pantry and got him a can of cat chow. She opened it and as she bent to sit it down she noticed the front door ajar. "That man, he'd forget his butt if I wasn't here to remind him!" she chuckled. Walking back to the kitchen to check on things, she noticed the cat was gone but left most of his food. "Not so hungry after all, huh!" she thought. Then she heard Frank's voice croaking from the bedroom, "Betty, Betty!" "Oh my God he's having a heart attack," she thought and she flew to the bedroom. Somewhere in the distance a dog or coyote howled.

## The Path part 2

She was hungry, starving, the need for sustenance burning like a hot flame. It had been two nights since she last fed and she had wandered far from her usual territory. She covered ground in an easy lope, zigging and zagging through the underbrush, her eyes made for the night time. A pale moon hung over the treetops lighting her way. Nostrils flaring, she kept the wind in her face as she hunted. A faint thread of scent tickled her nostrils and she veered instinctively for it. Game, she could smell it now and unerringly picked up the trail. There, straight ahead. It was across the lake so she swam across to the small wooden platform and squatted to catch the low breeze blowing across the lake promising game. There it was, headed straight for her so she froze till it was close enough then leaped up and caught it by the throat. The blood was warm and nourishing but not nearly enough to sustain her so she circled till her keen nose picked up the quarry's back track and followed it. Game rarely ran far by itself. Coming at last to the house, she let herself in, stole to the bedroom where there was the least chance of the game getting a weapon and mimicking Frank's voice perfectly croaked "Betty, Betty!" Somewhere in the distance a dog or coyote howled.

Bobby W Lee. 08/22/2012

## The Path part 3

I'm going to take you on a journey, if you want to go, but let me warn you; the path is twisted and dark. Stay close for evil things are waiting if you stray. Your mind must be open if you want to travel this road, few come back with their sanity intact. Don't be afraid, heh heh, I'll be just ahead. Say your prayers or whatever comforts you when faced with things you can't explain and follow me. What, you're not sure about this? The choice is yours and yours alone, it's your mind after all! Make the choice, I'm leaving.

Oh good, you decided to follow. Well, well, I underestimated your bravery, my deepest apologies! Come on then, the first stop is just ahead....

"Mommy, can I go play in the yard?" Elizabeth was eight years old and energetic, forever playing with her dolls and staging elaborate tea parties and camping trips for Barbie and Ken to

enjoy. " Stay where I can see you." Linda said, setting the crockpot she had pulled down from the shelf in the pantry on the kitchen counter. They lived in a small house well off the main road, the nearest neighbor, (Old Man Jones; as Elizabeth called him) was a quarter mile away. Elizabeth ran and got her dolls, putting them in a shopping bag along with their jeep and the implements for a tea party. Then she ran to the kitchen and grabbed a handful of cookies for the tea party adding them to the bag. She headed out the door to the back yard separated from a small lake by a narrow strip of mixed pine and hardwood. Setting up her tea party under a large oak, she sat down to play.

Linda watched her out of the back bedroom window and when Elizabeth looked up, smiled and waved. Linda was an attractive woman, sandy brown hair with blue eyes, slim figure, thirty two years old, divorced and worked as an Assistant Manager for the local retail store. Work kept her busy most of the time and the rest of it she spent taking care of Elizabeth. She walked to the kitchen and poured herself a cup of coffee. Her cell rang. There was a problem with a merchandise shipment so she spent the next forty five minutes helping the Asst. Mgr. on duty straighten it out over the phone. She poured another cup of coffee and walked out back to check on Elizabeth. Her heart jumped to her throat when she rounded the corner of the house and saw Barbie's tea party with some half eaten cookies but no sign of Elizabeth. "Elizabeth, where are you? Elizabeth Evans you come here right this instant!

Elizabeth!" Linda hollered till she was hoarse, but there was no sign of her. Linda dropped the coffee mug and raced back to the kitchen to grab her cell phone. She went back to the oak but there was still no sign of Elizabeth. Linda lost it. Screaming Elizabeth's name, tears running down her face, she searched the strip of woods and went all the way around the lake shaking and sobbing and calling Elizabeth. She sat down in the woods crying and started to dial 911, when a movement caught her eye. She wiped her eyes with her free hand and strained to see. "Mommy, Mommy!" she faintly heard from the other side of the lake. Linda sprang to her feet and blindly crashed through the thick undergrowth surrounding the lake screaming Elizabeth's name at the top of her lungs. As she burst out onto a path she saw a pale raven haired woman squatting on a small wooden platform on the lake, a narrow wooden walkway leading to it. "Have you seen my daughter?" Linda yelled across to her. The woman tilted her head oddly cocking one ear up, looking at her with the strangest black eyes Linda had ever seen. She had to have heard me, Linda thought choking back hysteria. "Hey, have you seen my daughter?!"

The woman pointed toward some trees and as Linda got closer she saw a small familiar form lying face down on the leaves. It was the last thing she ever saw. Somewhere in the distance a dog or coyote howled.

What, you want to go back you say, too late for that now! Come along the next stop is up ahead....

Cast out of Heaven for helping Lucifer, the angel fell. His wings burning off in the atmosphere of the planet he fell to, the agony unbearable as he made the transformation from angel to demon. Lucifer consoled him in mind speak as he hit the terra firma and lay gasping and shuddering. The flames finally burning themselves out. He was weak and feverish, burned and blistered, the light excruciating! He crawled into the shade of a large oak tree and passed out. Lucifer's spy in Heaven, he had lasted a long long time before being found out but that was over now! Not allowed by God to go to Hell, and cast out of Heaven, he was banished to the battlefield where God and Satan both trained their soldiers, Earth. Now he was here, slipping in and out of consciousness and trying to heal from his transformation. "Wake up fool, Lucifer snarled in his mind, here you have to eat to survive, not like Heaven! Get up and feed! Blood, you need human blood, hurry!" The ex angel rolled to his feet and staggered onward till he came to a lake. On the far side a solitary human was walking, a young woman with raven black hair. He swam silently across, using his mind to keep

her unaware of him till it was too late and he sprang up seizing her throat with his fangs. He drank and drank, till he felt the healing begin. She was so beautiful lying where he had dropped her, that he decided to spare her. After all she was the first human he had met. She was on the verge of death so he tore open a vein in his arm with his fangs and pressed the bleeding wound to her mouth and made her drink. The transformation was almost instantaneous, her once green eyes turned midnight black from the demon blood and her fangs grew. Lucifer tickled his mind, " Well, well, I see you made a new pet, but leave her there and head to a place called Afghanistan, we have work to do.....

Ahh, I see wheels turning behind your eyes. Come on we have more stops to make, keep up with me! Just over there..... That's right, don't be scared, just walk on out to the platform, Liliths waiting for you! I'll catch up with you later.....

Bobby W. Lee. 08/23/2012

#### The Path 4

As I sit down to write with no distractions, other than the cat rubbing on my leg, the dog whimpering and scratching at the door, a squirrel jumping across limbs in my peripheral, a garbage truck grinding in the distance, and the occasional Japanese hornet zooming past my head, I realize how peaceful it is writing from the back deck as the cat knocks over my coffee. But I have my fan to think of so I bravely mop up the coffee, feed the cat, let the dog in, scare the squirrel off, swat the hornet, and curse loudly across the sleepy neighborhood at the garbage truck. I pour another cup, sit down, flex my fingers and.....nothing! Blank page stares blindly at me waiting for my words to spill across her in an inspired flood so.....nothing! I scratch, yawn, stretch, sip my coffee in a glorious attempt at creativity.....nothing! OMG! Somebody hacked my brain and deleted the file marked "Today's Pages." I gulp down some more coffee and try to reboot but I must have a virus in the OS of my brain....nothing! For weeks I have written furiously, one storyline tripping over the other but now all my ideas have run screaming out the backdoor! Frustrated, I light a smoke, nibble a cookie, tap my fingers on the stone table.....nothing! I pull out all the stops grabbing my earbuds plugging them into the iPad, tapping music and cranking up my playlist, Creativity snickers and points her finger at me and still.....nothing! I dejectedly pull out the earbuds and kill the music, sullenly I throw in the towel and miserably sit, head leaned back, eyes closed, letting the blank file take over. I get pissed off! The best defense is a good offense, I had heard somewhere so I flogged my unresponsive brain till it came up with one tiny notion, "Write about not writing!" Aha!

Bobby W. Lee

#### Dark Places

The house needed a little work but it was perfect for Todd and his newly pregnant girlfriend /soon to be wife. He was an all around Handy Man, good with his hands, making a living picking up paint jobs and carpentry work from the locals. Todd was young, twenty two years old, blond sandy hair, good looks and a winning can do attitude. Everybody liked him and work came easily. Sandy was younger, nineteen, long chestnut hair, and a pretty girl with a sweet disposition. Everyone said that they were made for each other. They had met while Todd was building a deck for her aunt and she was visiting. Instantly they were inseparable. Then came the day that the rabbit died so they had started looking for their own place to start their new life together. The house had belonged to an elderly couple who had passed on and they had bought it at a steal. The economy being what it was, buying was cheaper than renting. It sat to itself behind a small lake, surrounded by the beautiful Georgia woods. Sandy had gotten a job at the local store to

help make ends meet, and they had moved in the house together and started fixing the place up. They were in love and shopped together buying things for the house to make it special and cozy as new couples tend to do. After a while they had the inside arranged and decorated to suit Sandy and Todd could now focus on the exterior. They woke with the sun streaming through the bedroom window, made some early morning love and went downstairs to make coffee. Todd took his out to the back deck while Sandy made their breakfast. Stepping out the back door he felt the threshold give a little under his foot and made a mental note to check it out. They ate and Sandy had to go to work, they were getting close to the holiday season and the overtime really came in handy. Todd had planned on painting the exterior trim, so he went out to the shed and got his ladders out and propped them on a low side of the house. He came around the corner with his paint and brushes in hand as Sandy was coming out to her car. She kissed him and told him to be careful and that she would probably be running late and to fix him something for supper and not wait for her to eat. He grinned and nodded assent, then picked up the paint and brushes and headed for the side of the house. Her late model Toyota 4-Runner disappearing down the wooded drive. He needed something to open the bucket of paint so he went back to the small tool shed to get a screwdriver. Rummaging for the screwdriver he thought again about the threshold so he picked up a flashlight instead. Walking around to the back of the house, he found the tiny crawl space, moved the cinder block propped against the plywood door, stuck his head in and shined the light around. The space was tight, becoming a little higher toward the far end, but manageable as Todd squeezed his lanky frame inside. Spiderwebs were strewn top to bottom the length of the area, having had years undisturbed to become layered in thick tangles. It was almost like tearing through sheets as Todd, using his forearms and toe tips inched his way along the damp block wall catching his Levi's back waistband on a nail and wriggling backwards to free himself then over to the right to avoid it. The crawl space had a pungent odor of mold and urine, no telling what had been down here looking for God knows what. Todd inched along till he found a sliver of light shining down marking a small hole beside the threshold. The insulation had long ago fallen out and dissolved into the mold and dirt under him. He shone the flashlight upward toward the sliver of light and found the problem, the plywood flooring had gotten wet from rain washing under the aluminum threshold and rotted the sub flooring in a dark moldy circle spanning about a foot. This would be an easy fix as the floor joists were still sound. He started to worm his way around to crawl back out when he felt something tickle on the back of his neck. He reached to brush it off but his hand hit a joist and simultaneously felt the pain from his hand and a sharp sting on his neck! Molten fire ran down his spine dreading down through his arms and legs, excruciating agony flowing through him immobilizing him! He could do nothing but scream, and he did. The pain was unbearable but he could do nothing but scream and take it, his muscles frozen by the venom. Tears and snot ran down his face and chin disappearing into the mouldy dirt making a sticky paste. His bowels let go as the poison began to attack his internal organs. An hour's ride away biologists were dissecting a new type of spider, a mutant, that was impervious to poisons. It actually absorbed them, blending them with its own unique toxin that was strong enough to paralyze a horse. To top it off they were spreading. They injected their eggs into their prey and as the paralysis from the toxin rendered the prey helpless, the spiderlings hatched within 24 hours and began to devour it, first sucking the fluids from it then eating it. The world was looking at a new predator making a bid at taking over and had the scientists worried enough to call Washington. Sandy was near the end of a twelve hour shift when her sister called and said that her mom was in the hospital and they thought she had broken her hip. She told her sister she would be right there. She informed her manager then as she was pulling out of the store parking lot, called Todd's cell to let him know. It rang and rang and finally went to voicemail so she left him a message explaining that she was at the hospital, and that for him to call when he got the message..... Todd heard his cell ringing in his pocket but there was nothing he could do about it. The agony being replaced by a chilling numbness and a weird sensation of a thousand tiny tugs all over him. He rolled his eyes around trying to see but it was useless, all he could see was the block wall and the thin sliver of light as his flashlight dimmed and died. Mentally he cursed himself for being stupid enough to crawl under here with no one home. He thought of Sandy and clung to the hope that she would look and find him when she got home. Fear raced through him as he realized she was working overtime and panic threatened to take his sanity. His brain frantically developed courses of action and just as quickly dispelled them. Oh God he faintly croaked, his throat raw and hoarse from screaming. This brought on a powerful thirst but even

his saliva seemed to have dried up. He lay there for what seemed like days slipping in and out of consciousness till he heard a sound. The key turning the lock above him and the door opening. Sandy was a wreck, physically and emotionally. She had stayed at the hospital till they brought her mom back to her room around four thirty this morning. Severely bruised from the fall but nothing broken thank God! Sis told her to sleep in the chair beside the hospital bed but she was worried about Todd, it wasn't like him to not call her back so she left for home. Coming up the drive, her headlights illuminated the ladders and paint still sitting against the house. She went in calling his name loudly, fear setting in. No answer. She went through the house calling him to no avail so she went out on the deck and called him. Still no Todd, so she found a flashlight and walked the circumference of the house thinking maybe he had fallen off a ladder. As she came around the back corner a rabbit sitting in the edge of the woods took off causing her to jump and her flashlight beam to miss the small plywood door standing forlornly open. Crying now she went back in and undressing went to bed crying herself to sleep. Below her unseen lay Todd sobbing silently to himself, his body unable to meet his demands to scream as thousands of spiderlings swarmed over him. The sliver of light fading to black as life left his body. Todd floated slowly upward out of his desiccated corpse fascinated by the flurry of activity below him. The pain was gone. As he floated up through the bedroom where his young widow lay sleeping with tear streaked face a new type of pain set in as horror struck he watched ever receding as a spider crawled up the cover and onto Sandy.

Bobby W. Lee

## Lilith

The old house stood silently on the face of the cliff staring out over the ocean in mute disregard. Its vine covered roof a testimony to its age. Saplings beginning to reach for the sky from its lofty head. It was a bed and breakfast now, the stone balconies afforded a beautiful view out over the ocean where pirates had once sailed into this place. After scaling the cliff face a brief and bloody battle ensued as they wrested it from the count who had spent an enormous amount of money and most of his life building it. His men had fought bravely but in the end were no match for the bloodthirsty pirates. For the next twenty some odd years they used the house as a base of operations and resupply dock until they were caught on the open ocean by a British Man o War and sank taking them to a man to Davy Jones Locker. The place was rumored to be haunted by the ghosts of the count and his fiancé who was visiting the fateful night of the raid. Most accounts claim though it was the pirate captain and a raven haired beauty that sailed with him. She was reported to have had eyes black as coal and reputed to be one of the undead. In the past few years there had been no claims of any sightings and business had picked up for the inn, people got a thrill out of taking parties to the inn and bragging to their friends they had slept in the haunted bed and breakfast. If they knew what I knew they would all leave the place immediately without so much as packing a bag. The pirate captain indeed haunted the place, his name was Juan Rica, but the real evil was Lilith the raven haired demon slut who had brought this curse on Juan and myself. I am Renaldo, the captain's first mate and we three were the only ones to leave the ship that was sinking from three cannon strikes below the water line. The way we left was our coffins floated free when the ship broke up and Lilith held them floating together in tight vicinity with her mind. She was an old and powerful vampire and I curse the night Juan met her and brought her to our ship. I loved her then, the three of us together drinking rum and falling into bed together. I have grown to hate her over the many years we have spent together and I think she knows it but allows me to exist because I am so useful. We spend our days in a cave below the house in the face of the cliff. There is a secret passage way that leads down to the cave but it is well hidden behind a fireplace. There is a tunnel that leads out to the face of the cliff that is small and obscured behind boulder and brush. The count had found this cave as a young man and had the house built over it. The cave was the vault for his vast wealth till Juan and I decided to plunder the place. Not long after was when Juan met Lilith and sealed our fate. We raped the count's fiancé while he watched helplessly, mortally wounded by

our swords and he cursed us in a strange tongue as he lay dying. We passed the fiancé amongst the crew and sold her for a slave at the next port of call. The port where we met Lilith, Tortuga. Ordinarily we would burn a house we looted but we immediately saw the advantage of this one. It held the cave in secret and you could see a ship for miles from its lofty decks. Not only this it was easily defendable if you kept a good watch that didn't sleep on duty. After the British sank our ship it was the perfect hideout to spend our daylight hours. We were too smart to shit in our nest as it were and we took our victims from passing ships or travelled to different ports to feed the thirst. Lilith was cunning like that. After a while the house sold after the reports came in of Juan Rico's ship sinking, and this was to our favor. For all practical purposes we ceased to exist. We kept a dinghy hidden in the woods beside the base of the cliff and would make regular forays out onto the sea pretending to be shipwrecked. Slave ships were our favorite and we would gorge ourselves sleeping the day away in the hold while our hapless victims were chained and helpless like cattle, waiting for the wolves to awaken and start the onslaught again. Those were good times. Then the slave ships vanished and pickings began to be a little slimmer but we managed just the same. The years rolled by. Juan and I started getting restless, we were used to roaming the seas at will, but Lilith demanded we stay put and continue this dull low profile existence. I grew to resent her authority and soon it turned into hate. I hated her for dragging us into this morbid life of hiding and feeding. I hated her for making us monogamous to her and her alone! She wouldn't allow us to sample any female flesh besides hers and my hatred grew by the day. I wanted out! Juan was still enamored with Lilith so I had to hide my feelings from both of them. I began to plot how to rid ourselves of her tyranny. To tell the truth I was very much afraid of her also. I had seen her strength when the bloodlust was upon us while on a slave ship. She had snatched a hulking monster of a man up over her head and thrown him from stern to aft, then ripping him limb from limb with her bare hands. Juan and I were powerful and cruel, but nothing like the awesome fury she displayed! I would have to be very careful how I went about this and try to find her weaknesses other than the sunlight for it was as toxic to me as it was to her. Not to mention the fact that her hearing was especially keen, much more so than mine. I began to study her, feigning new romantic interests and as we cavorted looked for signs of weakness. I was sorely disappointed! She seemed superior in every way. I took to sneaking up to the house on the rare occasion she was away from us, looking in the vast quantities of books for anything that might be of value to me. I gave Juan the pretense I was restless and never let him see me go toward the house. I would go outside the cave and down the face of the cliff, circle through the woods until I came to the backside of the Inn. Then I would climb the trees behind the house leaping out onto the roof and climbing down the ivy to one of the balustrades and let myself in the door. I took what few books the count had on occult and fashioned a hidey hole in the woods nearby to hold my treasures consisting of an oiled sealskin trunk that I partially buried and concealed the lid with brush. I took a candle here and there where they would not be missed and procured some matches. I fashioned a small lean to and even carried an oak stump up from the woods to use for a seat. I began to slip away and read when the opportunity presented itself, hungry to find a tidbit of knowledge with which to secure my freedom. There was only the briefest of mentions about vampires and vampirism, mostly dealing with description of the affliction. But there in the footnotes was a small list of riddances, sunlight, fire, and a stake made from white ash driven through the heart. Well sunlight and fire were definitely out of the question so I began pondering the effect and consequences of a white ash stake. This meant getting within reach of my intended victim in which case I would more than likely become the victim. I was almost sure being ripped apart would do in even a vampire but I shuddered at the possibility that I be ripped apart and yet live. This was worrisome to say the least! I longed for ports unknown and to feel the mast of a fast ship in my hand again and this drove me to the brink of insanity as I plotted different ways to kill Lilith. I began to hate Juan too, blaming him for bringing this upon us, the sappy womanizing fool! I didn't hate him enough to kill him yet (he was the only friend I ever had) we had grown up together and went to sea together, we were shanghaied together into piracy in a port in Africa after a long nights drinking. Later Juan and the pirate captain had gotten into a fight. The captain was hungover and Juan was outside his cabin mending a top sail. The captain kicked Juan out of ire and Juan had buried the large needle he was using through the captains eye and into his brain. Thus by pirate law Juan was the new captain which elevated my status from deckhand to First Mate. We were a lot fairer with the loot than the old captain and we took on more provisions in port than they ever had before so the crew were happy with us and grew to respect and count on us. Till Lilith, then they shunned us and would

have mutinied if they thought they could. Lilith was Evil itself and they knew it. I wonder sometimes if one of them signalled the Man o War that sank us but I'll never know, I was dead for the day in a coffin in the hold. I awoke floating on the open sea and Lilith had us lash the coffins together and using two lid planks make for the counts house with the hidden cave. We should have never taken her there.

Juan:

I worry about my good friend Renaldo, his restlessness increases day by day. I see the way he looks at Lilith when she is occupied and it makes me fear for him. He is no match for Lilith. Her power comes from some unholy place that I hope I never see. But being what I am and considering the life I've led and the lives I took before becoming this monster, I will undoubtedly see that place eventually. Let us hope it is never! My poor friend will most likely see it soon as I see the wheels turning in his mind. He has taken to slipping out when Lilith goes out alone, which is not often. He thinks she is unaware of his malice toward her but he has sadly underestimated her powers. She is not only vampire, but succubus and witch too from a bloodline long forgotten. Some say she is the original vampire but I do not think so. I think she escaped a master far worse than her! I pray I am wrong but by day I nightmare about a great evil falling on us unawares and wreaking vengeance for her sake. Thinking about it makes my cold sluggish blood even colder! I blame myself for Renaldo's situation, if I hadn't brought Lilith to our ship this would never have happened. We would probably be dead and awaiting judgement at the bottom of the sea with the rest of our crew. I knew something wasn't right about her when I saw her in the bar. Her eyes, no human has eyes like that, but I was smitten by her beauty and lust led me to take her back and share her with my friend damning us all. Not that we weren't already but this really sealed it with no chance of turning back. I remember the glow of hellfire in those black shark eyes right before she sank her ivory fangs in my throat. I vaguely remember her putting her wrist to my mouth and telling me to drink. I fought it for a minute or two but a trickle got through my pursed lips and the ecstasy came upon me. I sucked greedily looking over at Renaldo feeding on the other wrist. That same hellfire lit his eyes but not nearly as hot as hers. She pushed us both away laughing and told us to find the ships cooper and bring him to the cabin. 'Twas my ship no more, we had a terrible new captain. She had the cooper build three coffins and close off part of the hold, building a stout oak door that could only be locked from the inside, indeed a mortal man could not even budge this monster of a door. When he was done and she was satisfied she told him to change the mast head, to a mermaid with fangs for teeth. When this was done she casually drained him dry and threw his body over the side. Two of the crew saw her throw the body over though they didn't see her feed I don't think but no matter they were instantly afraid of her and the news spread like wildfire through the ship. Over the next few weeks more of the crew disappeared some to our hunger and some to jumping ship even though it was punishable by death on a pirate ship. The rest of the crew began to avoid us when at all possible and muttered about women on ships being a bad omen. Ha ha ha! If they only knew, this ship was damned and everyone on it! We raided up and down the coast of England picking off merchant ships and amassed a fortune in gold and goods which we carted back to the counts house hiding it in the cave. The crew was all for laying up but Lilith wanted to make another run on the English coast before the weather got bad so threatening and cajoling the crew into submission we left out again. We raided two merchant ships and chased another one out to sea gaining on it when the lookout cried out there was a ship behind us closing fast. The three of us were asleep in the hold as our ship tried to outrun the British Man o War but we were becalmed and the Man o War got within cannon range. We never stood a chance as they blasted away till they saw our ship taking on water then turned and left us sinking and helpless figuring the sharks would do for us. The three of us came back to the cave under the counts house and have been here ever since. Lilith is waiting for something but I just don't know what. I've tried to explain this to Renaldo but he's so full of hate he won't hear. He just shrugs his shoulders and glares.

The Count:

As a boy I grew up in a town close to this place. I would come out here to think and throw stones from the cliff into the ocean. I would pretend to be a seagull or a hawk looking out over the water pretending I was flying. I found the cave by accident walking over to a boulder to pee and nearly

falling in the hole at its base. It was obscured by brush and angled downward. My young heart thrilled at the chance to explore so into the hole I went. I could hear the surf booming below me and taste the salt on the breeze coming out of it. I imagined it would lead to the bottom of the cliff and was amazed when it opened into a cavern. He climbed back out and returned later with torches and explored its length and breadth. He told no one of his marvelous find and would spend hours at a time there entertaining himself. He discovered the tunnel leading out to the middle of the cliff face and this became one of his favorite spots. He became a young man and was drafted into the King's Army serving with a troop of Calvary in Africa where he distinguished himself several times. His parents passed away from influenza while he was away, the news arriving months later. In one skirmish he helped a woman who was dying, her village the site of a strategic battle fought for a river crossing. He propped her up and gave her some water, covering her with his coat. She motioned him closer and whispered in his ear in perfect English, listen to my words and never repeat them unless your enemies heart is truly black. She whispered some strange words in his ear and he was thinking he would never remember all that when she smiled and said, "If you need the words, they will come but I hope they never do, this is my gift to you and now I join my sister witches." With that said she softly sighed and passed from this world. The soldier took his coat, closed her eyes and went to rejoin his regiment. He never remembered those words till he lay dying himself and uttered that awful curse years later. His regiment saw more action in different places and finally they rotated home. The King in honor of his service made him a Count and granted him the land beside the ocean where his beloved cave sat in the face of the cliff. His business ventures proved to be highly successful and money began pouring in which he spent building his mansion atop the cliff hiring workers from around the world to help build his house the way he envisioned it. By the time it was finished, a period stretching over twenty years, he had met a young woman and fell in love with her. He planned on marrying her in the spring to come and delighted in showing her the huge mansion he had built. She stayed over often enjoying the beautiful view from the high balconies watching the moon over the ocean and seeing the occasional ship pass by. They were listening to a concerto by a promising young pianist when the alarm to battle was called and the clash of cutlasses was heard. The count had opened the secret passage and was trying to get her to leave him and go into it when the pirates burst into the room and cut him down before he could even draw his sword. They raped her before his dying eyes and the African woman's curse poured out of his throat on its own accord. The ancient curse invoking the undead.

Lilith

Dread not the night my child she is only the blanket pulled over the evil undead

Rather dread the pulling back of that blanket when evil raises her head

Your beating heart in her inspires

Culmination of thirsty desires

Warm is your blood that passes her lips

Your life waning in steady drips

Panic makes you arch your back

Against this most unholy attack

Your life is given for her feeding



To replenish Hell's most ghastly breeding  
Your eyes once filled with joyous spark  
Now stare empty cold and dark

She leaves you now and melts away  
Fearful of the coming day  
When the moon shows her face [tonight](#)  
She will hunt again beneath its light

For her it's been this way for ages gone  
Her black soul wandering on  
Eternity is her sentence  
And daylight is her fence

Bobby W. Lee

Children of the Night

Beware my sting for it is sharp  
My pain is a poison you can do without  
Loving me you take the risk  
Of falling into that black abyss

This life holds no joy for me  
My smile is just a sham  
My heart a petrified lump of stone  
You're better off alone

But come if you must, ignore the signs  
You may be the one to change me  
Smarter if you take flight

Than suffer my awful bite

Your blood will spill,your heart will freeze

This life for you will end

No way to make it right

Come to me and you will be...children of the night

“What’s Troubling You”.... This story starts out in rural Georgia. No not Russia, the Bible belt. The South, home of the good old boy,monster trucks,moonshining, you got it. It was a rainy morning, the raindrops sticking to the leaves like crystal orbs, the future revealed if only you could just read them. It was muggy and sticky as the South tends to be in summer, the doves crying mournfully and the robins singing their heart out to try and cheer them up. Trinity sat slouched at a round stone table underneath a canvas cover that you can buy at any retail store on the back deck of his brother in laws house. He was a painter by trade and a damn good one but the times were hard and not being able to compete with the Mexican idea of pricing, he turned to writing. He had secretly dreamed of writing horror and fantasy since elementary school and now was the perfect opportunity with time on his hands. He had never told a soul about his inner longing, not even his family knew. Only once had he mentioned writing to a close friend and they had scoffed and joked about it. That wounded Trinity deeply. So Trinity buried it in his heart and there it had lain dormant as he went through life trying to make his living. Gone but not forgotten. Rural Georgians in Trinity's neck of the woods tend to lean toward hard work,religion, and football. Writing to most of them seems to mean you're a slacker, an oddball, and a bit light in your loafers. Trinity was none of those things, well oddball was dead-on, but writing called from the depths of his soul like the sirens of Greek mythology and now he could fight it no longer. Trinity stuck his neck out of his shell and decided to hell with the torpedoes! He was tired of trying to fit society's mold for him, he was tired of having to be the good ole boy he no longer cared what anyone thought and so for the first time in his life, Trinity was alive! (And by God, he liked cats to!)So with complete abandon Trinity heeded the call .He pecked away at the IPad, he was definitely not a typist, but with a two finger passion he struggled on. Left, right, left right, left right left! The words came slow on the IPad, but threatened to overrun his brain as they backed up there. The hours rolled away as he doggedly toiled away. His cup of coffee beside the IPad cold and enjoyed only by the errant fly. The rain had long since stopped when he finally sat back, eyes itchy and neck and shoulders aching. A short story completed and a novel in the making sat before him on notepad. Trinity stretched his long arms, tilting his head side to side to make the vertebrae unlock, surprised at the two audible pops, and broadly grinned. He was pleased with himself, for the second time in his life he had done something about the ache to tell his stories (The first was in elementary school when he wrote a story about a man-eating tiger, getting an A, hence leading to the discussion with his best friend. "Only faggots write fairy tales!" still brought a wince of pain to the memory.) He made some fresh coffee and went back at it. Day after day he went on, stopping only for the necessities of life and the random paint job. A month or two later, he was taking a break surfing the web and came across a submission entry for a short story contest. He added the link to his browser and went on forgetting about it after a while. He worked religiously on his novel, developing his characters and relating their antics. He set goals for himself, 1000 words a day then 2000 as that goal was recognized. He cranked out two more short stories when he would grow tired of working on the novel. Trinity was serious, more serious than he had ever been in his life. His sister laughed when she would come out on the deck to smoke. "A writing fool ain't cha!" she said lovingly. Trinity just smiled and kept banging away. It occurred to him over supper one night that he should share his work and see if he was any good. He posted a couple of his short stories on a free site, then thought about the contest so he pulled it up and sent a story he had just finished. No editing, spell checking, nothing. The form said that if chosen to compete you would receive an email in the next three days and they would mail you a check, based on the number of words. Also you would get a hefty chunk of the royalties if published. For the next few days Trinity wrote, chewed his nails and tried not to think about it. While plugging away at his novel, a notification popped up letting

him know he had an email from the site he had sent the story to. His heart dropped as he read the bitter words of rejection, but swallowed the pill anyway and kept right on. He repeated the process with different publications and the rejection notices piled up. He took a small break and went fishing with his brother in law at their getaway home in Alabama for the weekend. They had a blast, fishing and checking trail cameras for deer and Trinity came back rejuvenated and ready to write. He sorted through his accumulated emails, mostly junk, before starting to write and one in particular caught his eye. It was from a publisher/writer by the name of Daemon Ryter. He had read Trinity's work on the free site and wanted to know if Trinity had any more he could read as he was thinking of publishing a collection of original horror and fantasy tales. Trinity shot him a copy of two of his favorite short works and settled back to wring his novel. The next morning he made his coffee and carried his iPad to the table. As he opened the ragged leather cover he saw a notification of another email from Daemon asking if he had any manuscripts for novels and would he be interested in meeting for coffee and discussion. Trinity was ecstatic, this might be his big break! He sent an email back and they set the meeting up, Daemon was going to be in Atlanta on business in a couple of weeks, flying out from his home in California. Trinity cranked out more short stories and continued to work on his novel.

Finally the day of the meeting arrived and Trinity set out for the restaurant they had agreed to meet at for lunch an excellent place called "The Diner" where people came from all around for the fine cuisine. As he travelled up the interstate in his old white Toyota4Runner he slapped his hand on the wheel and sang along to a rock tune. The song had him dreaming of becoming a famous author and moving to Beverly Hills. Arriving at the restaurant he nervously checked his attire and hurried in. Daemon was already there and seated. A feeling of unease came over Trinity. Nothing he could put his finger on so he ignored it as he shook hands and greeted Daemon. Trinity was fairly tall, 5ft10 but Daemon towered over him at 6ft6. Striking good looks in an Arabic style, beard neat and trimmed, he gave off an air of money and confidence. They sat and ordered as the waiter appeared. Daemon cut right to the chase, "I'm prepared to make you an offer on request of my boss." he smiled and said sliding a piece of paper toward Trinity. It was a check for \$5000. Daemon went on' "This is a retainer fee for the rights to your short stories and if you so decide, we can meet in L.A. And discuss your novel at which time you will receive a retainer for it as well." Trinity took a large gulp of his sweet tea. He felt dizzy and disoriented. His hand shaking, he reached across and shook Daemon's hand. "Thank you, I accept!" he stammered. "Good, my boss will be pleased. He might even join us in L.A., oh and by the way he is a silent partner and you may not ever use his name as he likes his anonymity. We will prepare a contract concerning royalties and details and present it to you there at which time if you still accept then we will have you sign, welcome aboard!" They shook again and as if on cue the waiter brought their orders. After a steak and potato meal to die for with baklava and coffee for desert they prepared to leave. "Thank you so much, "Trinity said again shaking Daemon's hand and once again that uneasy feeling washed over him so strong he was almost nauseated "My pleasure, I'll pass it along to the boss," Daemon chuckled and replied, "Until we meet in L.A. then." With that he turned and walked away.

Trinity sat and enjoyed another cup of coffee scarcely believing his good luck. He reached and felt the check with his fingers feeling the reassuring crackle, then pulled it out and read it over and over. "I am a professional writer!" he wanted to scream out, instead he secured it in his wallet and after tipping the waiter handsomely, left for the bank. "Are you sure it's good?" he half joked with the teller as they checked his I.D. and got his thumbprint. She glanced at the flat screen monitor in front of her and coolly looked him in the eye, "Sir, they could buy 50 banks like this one if they wanted!"

Trinity continued to crank out short stories and work on his novel, occasionally sending the odd story to various publishers and rejection notices clogged his inbox. "Ha, ha, ha, the jokes on you "he laughed every time he got one. He received a confirmation from Daemon with an airline ticket voucher along with a short message, " Looking forward to seeing you in L.A." And later that afternoon got another one with a hotel voucher and a brief instruction to wait there until contacted.

Life was sweet! He thought of his childhood friend and wondered what he would say about this. Something stupid no doubt probably like "Only faggots fly to L.A. And get rich," Trinity chuckled thinking about it. Then he got busy and started packing.

It was hot in L.A., sweltering and Trinity's only suit was soaked with sweat waiting at the curb outside the terminal looking for a sign with his name on it. "Excuse me, Sir, this way." a uniformed driver said to Trinity. His eyes about popped out of his head as he realized the driver was talking to him. He followed astounded as they walked to a limo a hip hop artist would have been proud of and the driver held the door for him. Inside the air was cool and nice as they made for the hotel. Checking into his room was another surprise for Trinity. They had really laid out the red carpet treatment, the room had a sunken tub and a wet bar! He poured a drink, made himself at home, and waited.

He didn't have to wait long. There was a knock on the door and a new driver escorted him out to another limo. "I can get real used to this!" Trinity thought as he sipped his drink and stretched out in the back. They pulled into a marina and up to a slip where a large yacht was moored; the driver opened his door and motioned him to follow. He led him up and onto the yacht where Daemon and two gorgeous ladies waited. Daemon welcomed him warmly. This is Helga and Angelique, two of my many assistants, Daemon said, introducing the women. And this is Trinity, one of my promising new writers. Keep him entertained ladies while I find the boss and get us underway. With that Daemon left them in one of the rooms that served as a bar, fully stocked with liquors and glasses. Angelique engaged him in conversation about his work while Helga poured them a drink.

Helga rejoined them and they sat making small talk and sipping their drinks. Helga draped her arm over Angelique's shoulder in a languid motion and Angelique rested her head against Helga's breast and shoulder both women's eyes seemed to smolder with heat. Trinity thought that they must be a couple when he felt a bare foot slide up the inside of his thigh rubbing him. He lost track of the conversation for a moment feeling slightly flustered. The door opened and Daemon and another man strode into the stateroom. Trinity visibly jumped flushing as he stood. Angelique caught his eye and almost imperceptibly gave a small wink and curled the side of her lip in a naughty little smile. Daemon introduced his boss, "May I have the pleasure of introducing you to our employer, Nick Vice. Ladies if you will excuse us." Helga pouted, "But we were having so much fun with Mister Trinity!" Giggling like schoolgirls they left the room holding hands. Nick was a man of medium height and build, thick black hair combed back and hanging to his shoulders. Piercing blue eyes peered out under thick brows with a thin scar that ran from his hairline across the bridge of his nose to the bottom of his jaw. He had a serious air about him and Trinity doubted the man smiled very much. They shook and sat down; Daemon poured them a fresh round of drinks then sat down himself. "Daemon tells me you have great promise and that you wish to become a famous writer." Nick said in a low gravelly voice, cutting right to the chase. "I think we might be of some assistance in that respect as long as you adhere to our rules which Mr. Ryter will go over with you in detail later. I am a very busy man and Daemon will be the one you deal with in all matters after [tonight](#), he handles a great many things for me and his decisions I trust implicitly. As long as you stick to our rules and they are not very many we will have a long profitable relationship and I'm sure success will not be a problem for you. We require that you sign a contract that Daemon will produce shortly and we require that you work solely for us, no freelancing. There are other small details that Daemon will go over with you at signing. If you are in Mister Trinity and I assume you are or you wouldn't be here, welcome to our organization and feel free to make yourself at home. Daemon, if you would be so kind as to take it from here, I have pressing matters that need my attention. Again, welcome aboard." With that Nick stood shaking Trinity's hand and abruptly left the stateroom. Daemon produced a black briefcase from beside his leg and brought out a stack of papers. "Would you care to have an attorney look these over, Mr. Trinity, basically they're what we've already discussed?" Daemon asked Trinity cocking an eyebrow. The alcohol had him warm and fuzzy, not to mention Angelique and her friend. "I'm sure they're fine." he muttered and began to sign at the red X's, flipping each sheet over as he signed. Daemon reached in his breast pocket and laid a folded check beside the stack of papers. As Trinity looked up he saw Angelique peeking through a crack

in the door behind Daemon's seat. When she saw he was looking she stuck her hand through the crack and curled her finger in the come here sign, then pulled it back and turned so that one eye was looking through. He saw her lips widen in a smile then she eased the door back closed. He quickly signed the rest of the papers, scarcely glancing at them. "One more little thing," Daemon said producing a peculiar looking hatpin and a glass slide from the briefcase. "All our employees must submit a blood sample, just a small drop. We use it to gather DNA and for insurance purposes." Trinity thought it a little odd but shrugged it off and extended his right thumb out to Daemon. "Just a little prick, there got it!" Daemon said. He pressed Trinity's thumb to the slide then put the slide in a small glass box. He gave Trinity an alcohol wipe and picked up the check handing it to Trinity. "Welcome to Vice Enterprises, but you must never use that name or mention Mr. Vice in any way. For all practical purposes you work for Daemon Ryter Publishing. We can go over details now if you prefer or we can go over them later at the hotel, just whatever you prefer." Trinity saw the door crack open again and told Daemon, "No rush, later's fine by me." Daemon put everything back into the briefcase closed it and stood up shaking Trinity's hand. "I have to go file this away, Helga and Angelique will see to your needs while I'm away. Your room is cabin 23." he said handing Trinity a key. "Thank you, I'm very grateful and look forward to working with you." Trinity replied glancing over Daemon's shoulder. Daemon left following the route Nick had taken. The second Daemon was gone the door behind the table flew open and Angelique and Helga danced through it wearing the skimpiest of bikinis and carrying a couple of bottles. "Let's celebrate in the hot tub," Angelique said coyly. Someone in the background was singing about [tonight](#) is gonna be a good, good night. Trinity couldn't agree with him more! In an office up above the main deck Daemon was busy marking X's beside Trinity's signatures dipping the hatpin in the blood on the slide.

As I write my being falls through the thin veil between our world and theirs. I snap back and look down to see manuscript after manuscript sent and I wonder. I read the words and am enthralled as I remember writing none of it and the question remains in my now conscious mind, who is actually doing the writing, as the gruesome stories unfold before my startled eyes. I am afraid that one day I will sit down to write and will never come back from wherever I go when "it" takes over. Even now my fingers move of their own accord and begin to type. I fight to read but only grasp a few words as I slip into that state, the words blurring before my weary eyes as I fall once again in that dreamy spiral, my fingers working furiously at the keys. When I jerk awake the flashing light on the top of the monitor tells me another manuscript has been sent but for the life of me I can't recall what it was or where it was sent. I look down at my fingers moving in almost a blur typing out the same words over and over again, Trinity...Trinity...Trinity...Trinity...till the screen is full and refreshes. Then they stop and I slump exhausted over my keyboard. I need to sleep. I need to eat. I need something to drink. Most of all I need to sleep! My fingers creep toward the keyboard and once again the cycle continues as I drift down into the spiral once again! I pop awake and once again the screen tells me another manuscript has been sent. Hearing a noise I look over and there is Daemon. He gives me an evil grin. "Ten years and still going strong, your readers still love you! Keep up the good work Mr. Trinity and Nick might keep you around another ten!" I look around dazedly, I'm still in the stateroom but it was last night I signed the contract, or was it?

Bobby W. Lee

08/24/2012

I hope you have enjoyed this as much as I enjoyed writing them. The following is an excerpt from a novel I hope to complete by late 2013. A dark fantasy titled Your Life or Mine.

\*Rem didn't need a lot, a loner, he made his living collecting bounties and hiring out as a sell-sword. In his early thirties, he was unmarried, self-reliant, and had no intention of settling down. He never knew his family, they were killed in a raid on his village when he was just a babe. He had been taken in and raised by an old man the rest of the villagers believed to be a warlock. His hair was black as a raven's wing and his face gaunt and beardless, burnt dark brown by the sun. The ladies all hungered for him but his heart was like a cold stone and none could hold his interest for more than a

few days. By his own admission, he was a hard man and more than once had he been on the wrong side of the King's laws. The trouble was, he liked killing. Hell, he loved it! A long scar ran down the left side of his face giving him a most sinister and distinguishing look. He rode in silence as he had done all day, as he had done for untold days. Rem was not a big man, maybe 150 pounds, but he was lithe and supple with a strength that belied his slim profile. Not a man of many words, his eyes usually said enough.....try me and die! Few could look into those cold grey orbs smoldering under heavy lids and not look away. Who wants to really stare Death down! Another cold camp tonight, his man was close ahead, maybe within a mile. Rem reined in a short while after dark beside a small creek and unsaddled the paint. After a brief but filling supper of deer jerky and creek water he stretched out full length on the ground close to where the little paint was tethered, sword handle resting against the side of his right hand. His finger absently traced the scar on his face. Tomorrow should end this hunt and he would have the big man's head in his saddlebag. He'd have to ride hard back to Azael's castle to collect his money before mother nature could ruin the features and cheat him out of his purse. A small orange twinkle caught his eye, maybe the gods favored him. Rem rolled over and stood up being careful to keep the twinkle in sight. He buckled on his sword, "Adder" named for the very skin that the handle was crafted from. The blade was made from obsidian and metal, forged in one of the Seven Hells the demon came from that Rem had killed to obtain this weapon of magical design. The sword always stayed razor sharp and Rem had found nothing that would withstand "Adder's" stroke, wood nor iron nor stone. Only luck had saved Rem that day, the demon had slipped and went wide with his stroke, Rem didn't. Walking quietly rolling the heel of his soft skinned boot to the toe, Rem eased through the underbrush till he came within sight of the small fire. What Rem mistook for a boulder turned out to be the big man himself. Gar in all his massive seven foot frame was warming himself over the tiny fire of peat moss. Before Gar's chestnut stallion could snort and give him away Rem stepped into the small clearing and stood, sizing Gar up. "You and I have business" Rem said low but clear. Gar jumped to his feet and looked directly to Rem drawing his sword with his huge right hand. He moved quick for a big man, covering the distance in an instant, sword overhead in both hands howling like a Banshee, he swung in a slicing arc. Rem whirled left and met the Giant's blow with Adder, knocking it wide then following back with a vicious swing. Gar barely caught it, and Rem whirled back with a blow that took Gar's head and sent it rolling down the hill. The hulk that had been Gar spewed blood out the severed neck then toppled to the ground with a heavy thud. Rem stood in silence for a long time, brooding over the fact that he had enjoyed killing Gar. The adrenaline rush, subsiding, he walked over and nudged Gar's body with the toe of his boot, then prayed for the Goddess to give Gar a warrior's place in the Seven Hells. Rem emptied Gar's saddlebags taking what little he could use then walked down the hill and collected his grisly prize. Stowing the head in one side of the bags he saddled the chestnut and led him up the hill to the paint. Saddling the paint he tied the chestnut to the saddlehorn, climbed up and rode back in the direction he had come. Keeping the paint at a trot ate up the miles in the darkness. For the next day and a half he rode unmolested, weariness finally making him stop beside the river Thenn, two days ride from Azael's. He thought of the tiny hut and spot of land the old man had left him and wondered if he would ever find the right one to share it with, his eyes closed, he slipped into sleep.

The spell was cast. Too late to call it back now, it winged its way like an arrow straight to the target and like a flare, the King's Maester burst into flames before the astonished eyes of hundreds. A mile away, Mael, the blond, short, but well-proportioned witch issuing the dart concentrated. She slumped and eyes rolling white, collapsed into the grass. The spell had drained all her physical strength if not her psychic. Give her a minute, she'll be fine, the old coven master grumbled as a half score witches ran to her. "That takes power!" he muttered with pride looking at his unconscious protege with wistful longing. That'll give them something to remember us by! Safely stowing their sister in one of the oxdrawn wagons, the small caravan turned toward the mountain trail and moved on.

Bobby W. Lee

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