

Tales of Horror and the Supernatural 2

by

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Sleeping Partner

I stood in the shadow of Ripon Cathedral's south side wrapped in the dark and gazed down the natural slope of the graveyard. A swirling mist engulfed the lower part and made the headstones look as if they were moving. The orange glow of streetlamps fought against the dark in the distance.

Organ music drifted out of the Cathedral as I flowed out of the shadows and levitated upright down the hill and mingled with the mist. Ecstasy gripped me as the long departed souls from the ancient graves flowed back and caressed my core. If I were alive, it would have been an orgasmic experience.

I laughed as I gazed up at the dark mass of the Cathedral which seemed to hover above the fog. I then drifted onto the street at the back of the graveyard with menacing energy flowing through me. A man walking his dog passed me. I growled! He turned around, but seeing nothing he hurried away.

I drifted through a walkway and drew back into the shadows as two women walked toward the town centre. I laughed out. One woman screamed, the other turned and said: "Who's there?"

"One who is neither here nor there!" I rasped.

"Show yourself!" shouted the woman who had spoken.

"Come on Izzie," said the other woman, anxiously pulling her friend.

I crawled away along the walls of the walkway cackling as the women scurried away.

In the town square nine PM rang, and a crowd gathered as I flew among the rooftops. A man in a long, grey coat blew a horn as the crowd cheered, so I landed next to him and blew in his ear. I then raised him up through the cold air before leaving him balancing on top of the tall obelisk which dominated the square.

The Hornblower screamed as he plunged through the air toward the ground. The crowd screamed in horror as they watched, with unbelieving eyes, the man thump into the cobbled ground.

As his soul left, I flowed in and raised the crumpled body and made it dance in front of the dazed crowd. Mothers grabbed their crying children and ran toward their cars.

"What devilry is this?" shouted a vicar.

"You ain't seen nothing yet." I said as I made the man's head spin.

I then felt myself being tugged up into the air, and I watched as Ripon became smaller and smaller before disappearing.

Opening my eyes, I watched lights dance around my darkened living room as cars passed the windows. *What a weird dream*, I thought. I had fallen asleep on my settee. Looking at my watch I drifted back to sleep.

I stood in the shadow of a shop doorway in Stonegate York and gazed along the ancient street toward the illuminated mass of the Minster. A strong wind blew litter along the street as the last of the shoppers scurried past well-lit windows. I screamed as I flew up and over them. Suddenly, I was dragged into an old room above a shop advertising a haunted house.

I hovered over a group sitting around a large circular table with a crystal ball in the middle. They had their arms stretched out at either side with hands held.

As I heard them ask if anyone was there I grabbed the breasts of one female who screamed. The room then erupted into chaos as I grabbed one of the men by the testicles and threw him onto the table.

"What's going on," screamed a panicking woman.

"Well, you asked if anyone was there... I'm here!" I rasped.

I walked into the ornate vastness that was York Minster and strolled along the Nave as the choir boys were bringing Evensong to a close. The admission desks were closed, and the attendants were closing the Cathedral. The last few tourists lingered in the light before heading out into the dark. Gazing up into the Central Tower I held my arms out in a cruciform shape and rose into the air. I revolved, slowly at first, but then becoming faster and

faster. I set up a vortex and screamed like a banshee as I spun. Choir boys and tourists shrieked and ran for cover as an internal storm raged. Candles snuffed out, sacred cloths and drapes were dragged along the floor and then sucked up into the vortex. The Tower windows imploded and the swirling air filled with a million deadly shards of glass.

I woke up, slipped off the settee and opened the curtains. The sun was shining through a freezing fog. *Another weird dream, I thought, just much more intense this time.* I showered, dressed then left for work after gulping a cup of coffee.

After another boring day serving the public I left the store and walked home through the frozen Wetherby streets. I bought the Yorkshire Evening Post on the way home intrigued by the headline ‘York Minster Vandalised’ on the billboard outside a newsagent.

The warmth from the central heating system greeted me as I opened my front door. Grabbing the mail I headed into the kitchen where I flicked on the kettle. Then, in the lounge I sat down to read the newspaper.

Apparently the Cathedral in York had been subject to a storm which blew through the interior and smashed the Tower windows. Investigators puzzled as to why the windows blew inwards rather than outwards. All the events happened with the door shut.

I stopped reading and gazed at the ceiling. Snatches of last night’s dream came to me. “Nah, just coincidence,” I told myself.

The kettle clicked, so I folded up the paper and was about to throw it on the carpet when I saw the small headline: ‘Odd Happenings in Ripon Results in Death.’ A local Hornblower was hoisted up to the top of the obelisk in the town square and then fell to his death in front of a gathering. “Coincidence?” I asked myself.

I burst through, and out of the cold turf into a night where a wind blew specks of snow horizontally. Looking around. I was in the graveyard of a massive dark structure. I realised the building was a cathedral when I saw the illuminated Gothic windows.

Keeping to the shadows I moved round to the front and then crossed a grassed courtyard. I turned and looked up at what I realised was the West Front of Peterborough Cathedral. Suddenly I heard a moan and looked in the direction. What seemed to be a thousand dead souls rushed at me and scooped me up. Together we ascended, swirling high into the sky as the snow stopped.

Eventually, I set down on Long Causeway one of the main shopping streets. I shape-shifted into a beggar and sat in a shop doorway. No one paid much attention except for a bunch of kids who mocked me and threatened to take my money. I stood up, and they ran off, so I sat again and watched the people of the night. Eventually, the snow and the kids returned. They stood around me in a semicircle, and one youth told me to hand over my money or I would get a kicking.

Shifting into a vampire I shot up and grabbed the youth. I exposed his neck and sank my fangs into his soft flesh. After sucking his blood I tore away half his throat. Then looking up at the stunned other kids, with blood dripping from my fangs, I asked in a rasping voice: “Who’s next?”

Awoken from the shock they ran off screaming into the night. I laughed as I dropped the dead body and then, assuming my human form, I disappeared into the snow-flecked darkness.

I heard the moan as I was engulfed and then swept up by the dead souls. Carried over the buildings toward the black mass of the Cathedral I screamed as they carried me toward the snow covered cemetery and the open grave I had burst out from.

Down I went into the black, open maw. “No, no,” I shrieked. Then, I woke up shaking and switched on my bedside light. Placing my hands on the comforting feel of my bed I calmed down.

I left my bed, showered and dressed. I then sat ready for work determined that there would be no more sleep for me.

The next day I became alarmed after reading about a young man found dead in Peterborough with his throat ripped out. I made an early appointment with my doctor and gave him a shortened description of what had been happening to me. He prescribed sleeping pills under the assumption that drugged sleep would not produce the same levels of dreaming

I had been having. He also made an appointment with a psychologist for me. Due to my anxiety he acquired an appointment for the next day in Leeds.

That night, I stayed up for as long as I could before taking two sleeping pills and falling asleep on the settee. I awoke the next morning with the realisation I couldn't remember any dreams.

I dressed and took the bus into Leeds St James University Hospital. The Psychologist, Dr Taylor, a man in his late forties, ushered me into his surgery and asked me to sit in front of his desk. I then explained what had been happening to me, leaving out the nasty bits. He listened, asking the occasional question.

In his analysis he talked of dreams and astral projections, then he said: "You appear to be breaking new ground Mr Connal. Until now I thought the concept of the demon soul belonged to horror and science fiction tales. I wonder what Jung and Freud would make of this?" He mused with a smile. He then regained his serious countenance and continued in his deep voice. "So, summing up what, on the face of it, we have here is the soul being possessed during sleep. Not normal sleep with dreams, but sleep where your soul is leaving your body.

"What can be done?"

"Well, we can start with medication. You say there was no activity when you took the sleeping tablets?"

"Yes."

"These work on a certain part of the brain, so I'm going to prescribe something similar just a bit stronger. And I will set up an analytical survey."

Levitating just above ground level I moved across the iron bridge which connected part of Balgay Hill with Balgay Cemetery in Dundee. A full moon gazed down on the headstones, which covered the hill and then swept off in the direction of the river Tay.

A dog howled as I sucked up power from the dead souls, then flew into the air and headed over towards the river which looked like a giant silver snake in the moonlight as it passed by the orange glow of the city.

I dropped to a few metres above river level between the road and the rail bridges, which connected Dundee with Fife, and spun violently. Waves built in intensity from both directions of the river.

A huge wave surged up the Tay and crashed into the road bridge ripping away a central part of the structure. I moved up into the air and laughed as I watched cars pull-up just centimetres from a drop into the maelstrom.

Seconds later another huge wave, moving in the opposite direction, crashed into the rail bridge pushing over about a third of the metal structure. A train heading south stopped just short of the ragged edge of the expansive gap.

I stumbled out of bed and opened my curtains. The sun had just risen into the frosty sky. I showered and dressed, then sat in the living room and watched the breaking news from Scotland on the television. The bridges on the river Tay had been destroyed by a mysterious, violent storm.

At nine thirty I was sitting in Doctor Taylor's surgery.

"Now Mr Connal, I have had to cancel an appointment with another patient to deal with you and your demon soul." Taylor said.

"I need help Doctor Taylor. I had another dream last night where something bad happened even after taking the sleeping tablets."

"Look Mr Connal I think...."

"Please help me," I interrupted, moving forward on my seat.

"Very well, we will go ahead with the survey this afternoon."

At the survey in a large room in the hospital a nurse asked me to put on pyjamas, and when I was ready to lie on the bed, which I did. Then Dr Taylor and an assistant entered the room.

"Mr Connal are you comfortable?"

"Yes Dr Taylor."

He and his assistant then swabbed my scalp, which I keep shaven, and stuck padded electrodes on my head and one next to my heart. After a while the lights softened and relaxing music wafted.

Slipping silently into the room, I watched from the shadows. After a while the younger man stood up stretched and left the room. I left the shadows and moved the bed. The Psychologist looked up, but after a while returned his gaze to his monitor. I then grabbed my body and jerked it up into a sitting position.

The good Doctor howled, then stood up and ran to the door, but I beat him to it and after turning the lock I threw the key away. I then grabbed him, rose into the air and revolved. Suddenly the door crashed in and the assistant rushed in gazing at us in shock.

“Wake him up!” shouted the Doctor, between screams, “wake him up now!”

The assistant ran over to the bed and shook my body. I woke up and watched as the Doctor dropped out of the air.

“Shit!” I shouted as the assistant ran over to tend to the Psychologist. The Doctor, however jumped up and pressed a red button on the wall.

“Wind up the experiment,” he said to his colleague as two burly nurses appeared.

“Immobilize Mr Connal,” he said pointing at me.

“Come on Davey-boy, you know I have no option. You’re a danger to others and to yourself,” the nurse said as I sat on a bed in a strait jacket in an empty room in a mental hospital weeks later. I didn’t know if it was day or night because the bright, electric lights shone all the time.

“You can’t stop me sleeping forever!” I shouted.

“You know the procedure, I’m just going to sedate you.”

He loaded a hypodermic needle and then with the help of the two other nurses he injected me.

“Wait!” I shouted. “You can’t do this, I have rights!”

One day or night the door opened and Doctor Taylor walked in and threw a bag on the floor. He grabbed me and released the strait jacket.

“Get some clothes on.” he growled with eyes that flickered red.

I pulled on the clothes and shoes that were in the bag. We then left the room. A big nurse appeared and asked: “What are you doing Doctor?”

Taylor showed his ID card.

“But...” said the nurse as Taylor grabbed him by the neck and threw him across the hallway.

Outside, Taylor rose into the air. “There you go, now get some sleep,” he said turning toward me. He then shot off into the dark screaming with laughter. It had appeared that my soul demon had selected another sleeping partner.

Sleeping Partner (Part Two)

A million souls tugged me out of my body and we flew through the starry night, finally landing on a converted church. Stamford Lincolnshire, a peaceful town until...

"Bastards!" I shouted as they flew off. I thought I was clear of this sort of thing—It had been months since I broke out of the mental hospital and, despite living roughly, I slept well.

Ah well, I thought. let's see what mischief I can get up to here.

I gazed through the window of a café. I could see the two red ball-like reflections of my eyes in the glass as could the young couple sitting in the window seats. The woman screamed hysterically as I laughed, pulled up my hood and walked away.

"Hey you!" shouted the woman's boyfriend, who had run out onto the High Street.

"Yes?" I asked turning around.

"You scared my girlfriend," he said approaching me.

"Yeah well, get over it sonny," I said turning away.

He grabbed me, so I pushed his arms off. I then swivelled around crouching, pulled his trousers down, and pushed him away. "Now consider this a let off son. Go back and sit with your girlfriend." I said as I stood up and then rose into the air.

Flying over the rooftops I landed in the grounds of a church after a while where I accidentally demolished a wooden noticeboard. I then walked over to a candle-lit pub, which fronted a brewery, and walked into the perfect semi-darkness.

The place was half full, so I walked over to a roaring open fire and sat at an empty table with my hood over my head. After a few moments of peace a bunch of young people approached.

The women sat at a table opposite me and the men jostled about asking what everyone was drinking. One boy dressed in a shell-suit and a baseball cap looked at me gazing at them and asked: "What's your problem?"

"You," I growled.

He then danced around me and pulled my hood down then sprinkled the rest of the packet of crisps, he had been eating from, over me.

"Derek stop that!" shouted a girl.

The youth left me and walked over to the table where the group was sitting and, bending over, he kissed the girl who had shouted. I grabbed the poker from the fire and flew over to their table and rammed it up his arse.

"Now *you've* got a problem," I said as I walked away from the screaming youth surrounded by his shocked pals. I then pulled my hood up and disappeared.

I levitated up the street wondering when I would wake up. Nothing happened, so I flew up through the night. The cold stars gazed at me. "I don't know what I'm doing," I shouted at them.

Drawn to a country estate in the middle of Lincolnshire. I landed outside three red-illuminated, Gothic-arched windows and peered inside the building. A hooded figure in front of an altar in a hall raised his hands over a pentagram drawn in chalk as a group of other hooded figures chanted a mantra.

Satanists, I thought, these well-off bastards—given privileges from God—never had to work in their lives seeking some dangerous excitement!

"Well, if it's a demonic visit they crave. Let's give them what they want!"

"Show us a sign of your presence Lord!" moaned the Priest as he swung his head from side to side.

I shape-shifted into a small girl in a white night gown and walked into the hall as the windows erupted, showering shards of glass everywhere.

"Wh- what's this?" stuttered the shocked priest.

"You wanted me to come, so here I am," I rasped pretentiously as I strode along the middle of the hall.

The hooded group ran to the sides of the hall and cowered. I spun my head, and they howled. Then, laughing, I rose into the air.

"What can we do to be worthy of you my Lord?" asked the Priest.

“Give your possessions to the people who work for you,” I commanded before smashing through the roof.

As I flew through the star-lit sky, I again wondered when I would wake up. I usually woke up sweating and regretting what I had done, I mused from a demon dominated mind. A thought then hit me: *perhaps this was reality, and my cosy little life back in Wetherby was a dream.*

“Oh well, what the fuck,” I said to myself as I spotted a couple having it off in an ancient graveyard.

I plunged under the turf in another part of the cemetery and blasted my way through to the grave nearest the couple where I smashed the old coffin and grabbing as much of the skeleton as I could I rose through the earth. Then, hovering horizontally a few centimetres above the back of the thrusting male, I held the skull facing forward over his shoulder and said: “Now look, you must do this somewhere else, I’m trying to rest.

The female screamed as she stared into the empty eye sockets, and she pushed the male off her. I jumped back, landed on my feet and held the skeleton up like it was a puppet. I placed the hands onto either side of the pelvis and made the skull look from male to female, who were shaking - unable to move.

“You shouldn’t be doing this sort of thing here, should you?” I growled.

“No,” they said shaking their heads like two naughty kids.

“Well go on—fuck off before my fellow sleepers wake up.”

I laughed as I watched them run off buttoning up their clothing. I then threw the skeleton away and rose up into the air. This felt so good I hoped that I never woke up again.

“David!” a voice thundered across the sky.

I looked around the stars and the darkened land.

“David, wake up.”

I opened my eyes. I was back in the mental hospital. Doctor Taylor the Psychologist was standing over me looking down into my eyes.

“What... what’s going on?” I asked. “You broke me out of this place!”

“I’m here to check on you David.”

I looked around, there were the two usual male nurses standing grinning.

“Now you just relax David everything’s fine. These two gentlemen will look after you,” he said as he left with a flicker of red in his eyes.

I’m still dreaming, I thought, or was I?

Boredom

There was a knock at the door.

"I'll get it!" shouted Brian Talbot, a fifty-year-old, balding man.

He opened the front door to two burly men.

"Can I help you?" he asked diverting his gaze to the floor.

"Mr Talbot?" asked one of the men.

"Yes, yes that's me." Brian said, childlike, without looking at the men.

"Mr Talbot we're debt collectors from Shield and Bryson," the other man said, showing an ID card. "We're here to collect the six hundred pounds you're due as you haven't responded to the letters we've sent you."

"C-c-come in," said Brian, who stuttered when he was nervous.

He stood aside letting the men enter the hall before closing the door.

"This way," he said scurrying in front.

Opening a green door he said: "My dear, there are two men here to collect money we owe."

"Oh," remarked Jean Talbot looking up, she was thin with dark frizzy, greying hair.

"I'll put the kettle on," said Brian, leaving the room.

"Look, Mr Talbot, we need to discuss..." one of the debt collectors started to say, but he was interrupted by Talbot.

"It won't take a minute. Please, take a seat."

The two men sat in the sparsely furnished living room talking to Jean, who answered questions with one word answers, until Brian returned with a tray with four mugs on it. He handed a mug to each of the men and Jean.

"Milk and sugar in each. I hope that's okay?"

"Yes that's fine," answered one of the men.

Brian Talbot looked at each man then gazed at the floor.

"J-J-Jean isn't feeling well today," he said.

"Are you working at the moment Mr Talbot?" one of the debt collectors asked as he took a sip from his mug.

"Made redundant last month."

"Where did you work?"

"In a factory, locally."

"Bill, I'm feeling a bit drowsy," said one of the men to the other as he stood up and keeled over, spilling his tea on the carpet, while the other collector passed out on the settee.

"Ah, you're with us then," said Brian Talbot as the two men came round strapped into chairs. They sat gagged with only their underpants on next to one another. Talbot spoke in a commanding voice as he strutted around in the basement of his house. Gone was the stutter and the childlike way of talking.

The men groaned and struggled as Talbot hauled out a huge butchers knife from a drawer. He then walked up to each man and looked him in the eye.

"Your type come here hassling working people who're going through a hard time... I don't know. Anyway, I hope you've had a good life up until now, because this is where it ends!"

Then, to the muffled sound of the opening music to 'Coronation Street' above, Talbot walked between the two chairs and slashed the near arm of each victim. The two men struggled more vigorously as they watched their blood splash onto the floor.

Talbot danced around the chairs, with a protrusion in the groin area of his trousers, slashing and stabbing his victims until a time when he stopped and retreated into a darkened area of the room. Then, with choral music from some advert seeping through the ceiling, he reappeared and slashed each man's throat.

A cold wind blew dead leaves around as two men walked along the front garden path of a 1950's bungalow and knocked on the door. One, a thick set man with a moustache, flattened his hair with his hands as the door opened.

“Mr Talbot?”

“Yes, I’m B-B-Brian Talbot.

“I’m Detective Sergeant Gary Haddows Yorkshire Police ,” said the thick set man, showing his warrant card. “This is Detective Constable Jim Nordale,” he continued, nodding toward his colleague, a tall man with short, red hair.

“Can I help you?” Talbot asked.

“We’d like to ask you a few questions if you don’t mind.”

“Please come in,” Talbot said standing aside.

When the door closed Haddows turned to Talbot and, holding up two photographs, asked: “Have you had a visit by, or have you seen, both or either of these men.

Talbot took the photographs and walked into the lounge followed by the policemen. He examined them under a lamp.

“No I’m afraid not. Why, whu-whu-what’s happened to them? Oh, this is my wife Jean,” he said, pointing toward his wife sitting in a chair wrapped in a blanket.

“Mrs Talbot,” nodded Haddows.

“Hello,” said Jean with a sigh.

“They’re both missing sir,” said Nordale.

“Oh dear. Where are my manners? Please gentlemen—sit down,”

After they sat he continued: “Now would you both like a cup of tea?”

“What’s this about Brian?” asked Jean.

“These g-g-gentlemen are looking for these men my dear,” Talbot said as he passed her the photographs.

“Have you seen them madam?” Haddows asked.

“No,” she said, shaking her head, “No I haven’t.”

“Okay then,” said Haddows as he rose, “If you do hear of something. Here’s my card,” he said passing a small, yellow card to Talbot.

“Won’t you stay for a cup of tea?” Talbot asked.

“Now Brian, the men are busy,” said Jean.

“Thank you, but no,” Haddows said as both policemen left.

At the police headquarters Haddows sat at his desk with the list of names that the two debt collectors were to visit on the day they disappeared.

“I don’t know Jim, that guy Talbot looked familiar.” He said to DC Nordale who was sitting at another desk working on a computer. “And did you see that look in his wife’s eyes!”

“What, that old couple? Give me a break Gary. What would they do to two big guy’s?” Nordale said looking up from his computer. “That guy Talbot was a weak, timid type.”

“Hm... that’s maybe what we were supposed to think.”

That night, Haddows sat in a darkened, empty CID room, the only light being his desk lamp. He was going through wanted persons files. He came upon the file of Derek Watson a paranoid schizophrenic who had walked out of a maximum security hospital ten years ago posing as the doctor he had just killed. Watson was serving a life sentence for murder.

“Got you! You bastard!” he shouted.

A woman jumped out of her Audi and stared at one house then another and then picked the second. She walked along the front garden path in her dark blue, pinstriped power suit with her long, red hair bouncing.

“Y-y-yes? Brian Talbot asked, sounding like a shy child as he answered the door.

“Hello, I’m Geraldine Gedy. I represent Denby Constuction, you have been chosen for this month’s prize of a free estimate for a quality conservatory.

“Come in my dear. Jean, my wife, and I were th-th-thinking of getting a conservatory where we could sit and watch the s-s-s-setting sun.”

“Jean, this young woman is going to give us a free estimate for a conservatory where we can sit instead of in here all the time,” Talbot said, leading the saleswoman into the living room.

“Oh Brian, I don’t know...” sighed Jean as she looked Gedy up and down.

“Please sit down. Would you like an n-n-nice cup of tea?” Brian asked rubbing his hands.

“Why yes, that would be great,” said Geraldine as she sat on the settee.

Brian left the room to fetch the tea.

“Listen my dear, I don’t think we need a conservatory. We’re fine as we are,” said Jean

“What about your husband, he seems to be under the apprehension you wanted a conservatory?”

“No, I think you should probably leave.”

“Well, I always listen to wives,” said Geraldine as she rose.

“Where are you going? Here’s your tea, and I’ve buttered scones,” said Brian as he entered the room.

“But, your wife...”

“Never mind Jean. She’s an old skinflint!” Brian said casting a look at Jean.

“Hello Geraldine,” said Talbot to the woman as she came out of the drug-induced sleep. Her long-red hair had been crudely cut off and her suit stripped. She sat strapped into a chair in her under clothes gagged.

The confident Brian Talbot walked around the chair, illuminated from one small spot light from above—the rest of the room being in shadow.

“Now madam, how does it feel—no power suit, no long-red hair. And, I’m going to take your dignity.” Talbot said pulling away the gag

“You’re mad!” whined Geraldine. “If you’re going to rape me just get on with it!”

“Rape you! Oh no, I’m not going to rape you. You will beg me for your life, however, I’m afraid.” Talbot said as he faded into the shadow.

Then after a while with the strains of the theme tune to ‘East Enders’ filtering down from above Talbot appeared out of the dark with a butchers knife in one hand. Geraldine struggled and screamed.

“It won’t do no good. You see, she’s deaf upstairs especially when the soaps are on TV.” Talbot said as he approached the chair.

Geraldine shook as the raised knife glinted in the light. Suddenly a hand grabbed Talbot around the head and a knife slit his throat spurting blood out over his clothes.

“You will not harm any part of this girl’s body you bastard,” said Jean as she let her husband drop to the floor with the butchers knife clattering away into the darkness.

Haddows and other police burst into the scene as Jean released the sobbing Geraldine.

“I don’t care what you do with me as long as he can’t harm anyone else. I’ve lived too long with it.” Jean announced.

At the police station DS Haddows interviewed Jean Talbot in the squalid interview room in the presence of an appointed solicitor.

“Now Mrs Talbot what is your real name?”

“I’m Valerie Wales.”

“And you lived as man and wife with Brian Talbot.”

“Yes that’s right. His real name is Derek Watson,” she said placing a nervous finger on her lower lip.

“I want you to tell me of the day the two debt collectors called.”

Valerie described the whole event.

“And did you help him downstairs with the bodies Valerie?”

“No! Detective Sergeant, I hate violence. I only stayed with Derek because I thought he had mended his ways and because I was frightened of him. If I ran away, he would only find me!”

“Why, after ten years do you think he had returned to his killing ways?”

“I don’t know. I suppose through boredom!”

On the Other Side of the Fence

I hated the nights they drank. The shouting and screaming went on forever. My mother and her boyfriend had been together for three months now. Unfortunately my bedroom was right next to hers, so I heard everything. She often came in to see if I was all right, breathing alcoholic fumes over me.

I hated her boyfriend, Ron, he looked like a caveman with tattoo's. Often, when he was leaving in the morning, I would be sitting in the kitchen having my breakfast. He would come up to me with sad eyes and look as if he was going to say something, but I would grab my bowl and head into the lounge.

On my way to school I looked at other kids, and thought: *Why can't I have a normal, happy childhood?*

"What's wrong with you Martin?" my mother asked me once when she saw me staring into space.

"I want Dad back. That'd make me happy."

"You know that's not possible he's gone to heaven."

"You mean he's dead. Mum-I'm 11!" I said with a sigh. "And I don't like your boyfriend!"

"Ron makes me laugh. Surely I'm allowed to be happy!"

"I want to be happy too," I said, stomping out of the room.

Taken on holiday to Gran Canaria, I enjoyed the sunshine. We stayed in an apartment at a place called Koala Gardens in Maspalomas. I slept on the settee in the living room while my mother and Ron occupied the only bedroom.

They went out drinking every night, so I did my own thing.

My mother would say, "Oh, let's go down to the beach tomorrow," before she went out for the evening. Then the next day she would say she wasn't feeling well!

One morning, I left the apartment and walked in the direction of the beach as the sun crept over the tops of the palm trees. I walked along paths which cut through well-trimmed, water-soaked parkland.

Drawn by screams of joy, I approached a large fence which surrounded a water park. Oceanic Park was teeming with families enjoying themselves in the sun. Kids were sliding down the water chutes and wading through the shallow pools. Adults were sunning themselves while keeping a watchful eye on the children.

Two boys ran up to the fence where I was standing and banged their fists into the wire mesh. I jumped back in shock.

"Come in and join us," one of them said, smiling.

I felt my heart lighten as the other boy pulled up part of the fence.

I was going to crawl under when something in my mind shouted: "Stop! What are you doing?"

I stepped back and shook my head. Suddenly the two boys wrinkled into skeletons before becoming dust. The water on the chutes dried up and small lizards scampered across the hot plastic.

I stepped further back from the fence shaking my head. The loungers which had people on them by sparkling pools now were broken wrecks sitting by empty pits. The brightly painted signs were now peeled and broken. I turned and ran until my legs hurt.

I slowed down as I approached a busy road and was about to cross as a hand tugged me back. Someone shouted something in Spanish. I shook free and ran on along by a storm drain where palm trees stood in lines on either side.

I could see people wrinkling to skeletons on every side the paradise was rapidly becoming a hell. Running on toward a lighthouse I found myself on a beach. I shrieked as people on loungers became skeletons. The ocean dried up and the beach stretched on forever into the distance.

I stepped on a bus which took me back to Koala Gardens.

"Martin, where have you been? I was worried," my mother said as I walked into the apartment through the small terraced area which looked on to the pool.

“Oh, you know? Just went out for a walk.”

Ron was lying on a lounge on the terrace listening to music while reading a magazine.

I shouted: “kick the ball Dad!” as my father ran up to the plastic football in our back garden.

He kicked it clean over the fence hitting the washing on the line next door. We then collapsed laughing onto the lawn.

“Martin,” he said.

I woke up in the living room of the apartment, the early morning sun was streaming in between the curtains. Loud snoring was coming from the bedroom.

“Martin,” said my father.

I sat up and looked around. Why did I hear my father’s voice? Was it reaching me from the dream? I jumped off the sofa and opened the curtains. I had to be hearing things, my father had been dead for over two years.

Dressing and then grabbing a drink from the fridge I sat on a plastic seat on the terrace. I gazed at a couple taking an early dip in the pool as I took a sip.

“Martin,” said my father.

I dropped my drink and stood up. The voice wafted on the breeze from beyond the apartments. I left the terrace, walked around the pool and left the area in the direction of the voice.

I left Koala Gardens and crossed a road and walked along a well-trimmed path until I reached a familiar area.

“Martin,” said my father.

I peered through the palm trees at the fence of Oceanic Park. The water was back, and children slid down the chutes. Grown-ups on loungers splashed sun cream over their skin. My father walked up to the fence.

“Come on Martin,” he coaxed. “I want you to be with me son.

“Dad!” I shouted running up to the fence.

He lifted the wire and said: “Come on son. I’ve missed you.”

I ducked, but was suddenly jerked back by a hand with a tattoo on it.

“Martin what are you doing son,” said Ron, turning me to face him.

“Leave me alone. I want to be with my dad and the happy kids. They want my friendship.”

Ron crouched down and looked at me. “Despite what you think of me, I’m a Medium—I mean I speak to dead people. And believe me son your great father isn’t there. They don’t want your friendship, they want your soul. I hope you understand what I’m telling you.”

I turned toward the fence and my father looked at me with pleading eyes.

Ron turned me back to face him. “Whatever you see on the other side of that fence isn’t real. What is real is that your mother loves you.”

A Necessary Evil Part two (The Bus Driver)

I found it easy to walk out of the prison after I found I could shape-shift. The demon power was now taking up increasingly more of me. I should have been horrified, but I was strangely ecstatic. “We have unfinished business in Arbroath,” the demon whispered in my mind as I changed into a friend of mine and made my way to the local railway station. The police would be on the lookout for someone answering my description.

As I watched the countryside pass by, my mind pulled me back to 1975 where I was walking along Arbroath High Street. I stopped at a shop and checked my reflection in the window.

“Hey you,” said a voice. I turned to see Ed Duncan walking toward me followed by his gang. I made to escape, but I was surrounded. “See here, I'm a hard man,” he said taking me by the neck and pulling me down.”Now I want ye to pray to yer mother before I kick the shit out of ye!” I saw a girl I fancied across the street laughing at me as I knelt and prayed to my mother. I arrived back in Arbroath, and that night a figure left the house I was watching from the dark confines of Carnegie Park. Ed Duncan was heading out. I flew over the park hedge and landed on the pavement behind him in the orange glow of the street lamps. “Hey you—hard man!” I growled.

“What...? He uttered, turning.

“You-you're the hard man!”

“Look, I don't know what you're talking about,” Duncan said, turning around and hurrying toward the end of the street.

“Oh don't you!” I said, landing in front of him.

“Wh - what are you?” he said, in a trembling voice.

“Down on your knees,” I said.

“What?”

“On your fucking knees!” I thundered in the unworldly voice of the demon.

He knelt down and cried.

“Pray to your mother before I kill you!” I commanded.

He prayed as a woman appeared walking a dog. I turned and hissed, sending her scurrying back along the street.

“Right, say 'I'm a hard man', and I won't kill you,” I said, lifting him up by the neck.

“Oh, I'm a hard man,” he said.

I snapped his neck and then, pulling the dead face toward mine, I said: “I'm a hell'va liar I'm afraid,” before throwing the body into a front garden.

I flew through the night and landed in the Western Cemetery. I strolled up the main road surrounded by darkened headstones which swept off in all directions eventually washing up against the perimeter walls. The moon rose and silhouetted a huge shape with turrets which I recognised as the Mortuary Chapel. I flew over and landed in front of the building.

Constructed in the neo-Gothic style it appealed to my present being.

As I was about to explore I was tugged away and flew over the town to Viewfield Road where I landed behind a figure walking a dog. The figure turned around and as I saw the face illuminated by the moonlight I was transported back to the time when I was a 16-year-old apprentice electrician. I was always a big person, so manoeuvring under floorboards to run cables was difficult. A nasty tradesman didn't help; Ian Tate jumped on any mistake I made. I hated him, he made my whole working life hell.

Once, he pushed me under floorboards and told me he would nail up the hatch If I didn't run the cables in a certain time—he had told the boss he would have the job done that particular day.

Now, I was creeping up on the electrician with demon power pulsing through my veins. I grabbed the bastard and flew off into the night. I landed outside an empty property where I kicked the door open and pulled Tate in.

“You're Ross Robertson,” said Tate. “I've been waiting on this—I saw it in a dream. Now you're going to rip up floorboards and throw me in and then replace them. What I did back then son, I did for you - to make you hate me and become an electrician to spite me.”

This threw me, and I stood staring at him for a while before I said: “So you know how this ends. Well I hate to disappoint!”

I then prized up some floorboards releasing a musty smell into the room. Tate suddenly ran to the open door which slammed shut. He then pulled on the handle and banged on the door as I grabbed him and pulled him over and pushed him into the founds of the house.

“You’ll never know how much festering hate I have built up for you. What bullshit—doing it for me! You boss-crawling bastard!” I growled at the struggling man as I replaced the floorboards and hammered the old nails home with a brick I found in the fireplace of the room.

The moon shone on the headstones in the Abbey Cemetery within the grounds of the ancient monument giving them a ghostly appearance. I floated between them as I sucked up energy from the souls of the dead.

Satiated, I burst out of the graveyard and onto the town where I came across two drug addicts sitting on a bench beside a car park making howling noises at the moon.

I settled behind a bush and shook it.

“Hey, What’s that Jimmy?” one boy said to the other.

“Nothing, just the wind Dougie!”

I shook it again.

“That’s not the wind,” said Dougie, rising and approaching the bush with his friend.

When they opened the plant I shape-shifted into a giant wolf and growled at them through large canines.

“Oh shit—run!” shouted Jimmy as the two addicts sped away leaping over cars.

Comically howling at the moon I changed back into my human form.

I then levitated up Market Place wondering how long I could carry on like this. The doors to The Corn Exchange pub swung open, and a couple descended the steps to street level and headed toward the High Street.

I drew into the shadow of a shop doorway noticing that the female of the pair was Helen, my girlfriend. I followed the couple up the High Street and into The Pageant pub where I scampered over the ceiling and hung over where they sat. Things had got so out of control I wasn’t sure if I was visible or not. I didn’t, however, want Helen to see me.

Helen’s date got up and headed toward the toilet so I scampered over and dropped behind him as the door swung shut. I pushed the door open and stole into the well-lit room.

Helen’s friend, who was standing at one of the urinals, turned his head and seeing no-one just shrugged and carried on, which told me I was invisible.

I tapped him on the shoulder and he looked around spraying his shoes and the bottom of his trousers.

“Shit!” he shouted. “Who the hells there?”

“Oh dear, you can’t let Helen see you like that,” I said as I pulled him into one cubicle and slammed the door shut. I then grabbed him and smashed through the window to the outside. I flew over to the ancient Abbey and placed him on the bottom of the glassless rim of the south transept window, known locally as the Round ‘O’, some 100 metres from the ground.

“Now be a good boy and hang on here until someone sees you in the morning,”

“Jesus! Are you the Devil or something?” he wailed.

“No, none of the above, just someone who’s paying a high price for being stupid,” I said as I flew away.

Slumping into a doorway I waited across from the Pageant pub. Eventually Helen appeared with a man. They walked along Ponderlaw Street toward her house. I followed in the shadows.

The man pulled Helen into a hedge lined front garden and forced himself onto her. “Stop it Norrie,” she screamed. “I want to go home.”

He ignored her plea and continued. I grabbed him and threw him away with such force I knew he wouldn’t survive. I then stepped back into the shadow cast by the hedge.

“Oh,” said Helen, “I know it’s you Ross.”

“Look Helen... I didn’t mean to follow you.”

“It’s just as well you did.”

She walked toward me. "Let me see you."

I walked out into the open.

"Oh dear," gasped Helen. "What's happened to you Ross?"

"I crossed a line Helen. A line I can't re-cross."

"You look different—white skin - red eyes."

"I can't stay. I just wanted to talk to you one more time."

"The police are turning Arbroath upside down looking for you. And a body was found in Strachan Street this morning; was that you?"

"It's not me Helen. Please believe that."

"I do."

"I have to go," I said, turning. "Oh, I forgot," I continued, turning back, "your boyfriend is clinging to the Round 'O' at the Abbey."

"He's not my boyfriend and... we'll leave him there until morning—he was starting to bore me!"

I flew over the darkened parkland toward the sea with demonic laughing in my head. I landed beside a bus, where a bunch of youths were kicking another youth in a white jacket, realising that I had flown back in time. What I saw was me being set upon by a gang of thugs from Dundee, who roamed around the local area looking for trouble.

I flew under the ground and then rose slowly out of the ground beside my younger self. Then I made the whole area lift and fall.

"Now I have your attention please stop that—it hurts me!" I said as I circled the whole mob at great speed.

"What the fuck's this!" shouted a youth as he ran on to the bus followed by the others.

I pulled my younger self up and said: "You'd better get yourself home, your mother will be worried."

I watched the fear and question in his eyes. "I'll deal with this lot," I said looking toward the coach.

Watching myself run away I turned to the bus and its violent inhabitants realising that I was to be the eternal bus driver for these souls.

The driver who had now returned, tried to ignite the engine. I waved a hand, and the electrics cut out. I then levitated around the vehicle with eyes burning red. The bus driver ran out of the open door which I then shut stopping the others leaving.

After a while the coach door opened, and I walked in and sat in the driver's seat. The door zipped shut as I turned to my hosts and said in the grating voice of the demon: "So you like danger and causing trouble do you lads! Well, strap yourselves in for a hell'va ride!"

The Dark Man

Street light reflected off the branches of the gnarled trees that slithered around the Howff Graveyard in the centre of Dundee. The darkness of a winter's night slipped over gravestones and rushed to the border of the cemetery and then crawled up the surface of the peripheral buildings. Darkened paths led off through shadows as outside buses and taxis flowed along Ward Road spraying light through the wall railing.

A man in a great black coat flowed along the primary aisle as the monolithic DC Thomson building looked down through the gloom. He caressed the headstones as he went on by and smirked as sighs issued from the graves. His crimson eyes penetrated the gloom as he lifted a hand and darkness seeped into the regions behind the stones. A child knocked him over onto the turf.

"Hoy! What's this!" The man shouted freezing the boy in the running pose. He wore 19th century clothes.

"Please, I need to get away from them!" The boy pleaded.

"Who?"

"The coppers... can't you see them?" The boy said as he looked from side to side.

"There's no one there son," said the Dark Man.

"Oh, but... they're coming! Let me go!"

"I think you've been running around here too long! And now it's time to go." He waved a hand and black vapours crept over the gravestones and engulfed the boy sweeping him away.

A mist settled over Balgay Cemetery as the dark that had invaded the Howff flowed up the hill on which the graveyard sat. Through the headstones it crept up and over the trees chasing the light out of every crevice.

The man with the long black coat walked along the iron bridge which connected the Mills Observatory with the graveyard. Owls hooted and small mammals rustled around as he strode off the walkway and along the path between the brooding graves.

He waved a hand, and shadows ran from headstone to headstone muttering and giggling. Ancient chains around the edge of graves rattled as he passed-by. The partially full moon appeared from behind a dark cloud and illuminated the pallid features of his face.

The man walked on, around the large spiral path which wound round the main hill of the graveyard like a viper. He stopped and turned to gaze with crimson eyes over the gravestones. They flowed down the hillside and through the trees right up to the small wall beside Glamis Road where street lights formed orange balls in the mist. He watched as a huge cloud of darkness seeped toward him. The dark engulfed him, and he laughed as spirits appeared and pulled him into the air. He rose into hidden worlds where souls swept around him and through him.

"Ah, my friends I see you are restless," he said as he held out a hand, Please don't be anxious. Your time will come. He then raised a fist, and the cloud split up into many parts as he floated back on to the path.

The man heard sobbing in the distance and flowed over headstones to the source of the sound where he found a woman standing beside an engraved granite, medium-sized stone.

"What's the matter my dear?" he asked.

The woman looked up in surprise. She appeared to be in her late thirties and dressed in early twentieth century clothes.

"It's my family... I miss them so!" she sighed as her gaze fell back upon the headstone.

"How long have you been standing here?"

“Not long.”

“Oh but you have, and it's time to go... and join your loved ones!”

The man raised a hand and the parts of the black cloud joined up and descended sweeping up the sad woman.

“Farewell my love find the peace you deserve,” said the man watching the ascending blackness.

The moon shone on the sandstone sculpture that was the large mortuary chapel in the Western Cemetery Arbroath as a black cloud descended. The dark man stepped down and walked along the cemetery central path as leaves rose into the air either side of him.

He raised a hand and phantoms opened the doors of the mortuary and disappeared. Inside, shadows fled up into the rafters and shafts of light flowed down forming a figure of a man, who walked along the central aisle.

“I've been waiting for you coming.”

“Why have you done this son?”

The phantom looked around him and sighed. I can't pass over to the other side as the other souls around me have.

“Why is that?” The Dark Man asked as he flowed along the central aisle toward the young man.

“I... I have been waiting here for a long time. I did something bad and found refuge here.”

“Come, tell me what you did.”

“I... can't,” sobbed the man.

“Come now, I am not here to judge or condemn, but to help.”

“I killed... my love in a fit of rage out of jealousy!”

“Okay, I can tell this was a long time ago, and your wife has forgiven you as she moves within the astral planes.

The black cloud flowed in through the open doors and grasped the man.

“And who helps you?” asked a ghostly voice from the shadows.

“Me...” asked the man as he rose into the air, “I am beyond help.”

The Dark Man 2 (Different Person)

I drifted through the cold air, my gaze attracted to glowing windows like a moth to the flame. Behind the glass people prepared meals and watched television. Early December brought darkness which permeated everything and chased light away.

I had come back to walk the Earth for a purpose I couldn't figure out as I passed along the frozen streets of Arbroath. A warmth flowed through my cold body and caressed my heart as I saw a young mother hug and stroke the face of her newborn baby. But the reflection of my red eyes in the glass made me look away and move on my way.

A youth dressed in dark clothes ran out of a close and crashed into my back. "What the fuck..." He yelled, "get out of the fucking way you tosser!"

I turned and hissed at him.

"Whoa," he said backing off before rushing back toward the building. He made it to the mouth of the entry before freezing in the running form. I could sense his frightened eyes darting from right to left as I approached from the rear.

"Now sonny," I growled in an other-worldly voice, "you got to slow down and show respect for your elders. Oh, and stop swearing," I said as I walked away leaving him frozen for a few moments.

I entered Springfield Park and stood in the darkness and gazed at the glories of the universe. As I spun around, I was suddenly aware of a figure standing next to me.

"I know why you're here, but I'm not sure whence you come," said the man in a rasping voice.

I turned to look at him. He was of average height with dark hair and had flickering red eyes. "I'm here for the truth," I said in my other-worldly voice. "I come from between the light and the dark. I come from... between dimensions," I continued as I returned my gaze to the heavens.

After a while I left the park and entered the Eastern Cemetery. Mists swirled among the gravestones and climbed into the black sky like escaping phantoms. Power flowed into me and I chuckled as I rose into the air.

Back on the ground I caressed headstones as I danced along the damp grass and played hide and seek with street light reflected on the polished faces of the stones. A marble angel aglow in the moonlight stared at me as I circled a bush and then ran up the slope of the central burial area bathed in the same opal moonlight. The lines of graves on either side watched me.

I came to a halt.

White marble angels with eyes of black were raising souls through the graves. A column of swirling mist rose into the sky toward the twinkling stars, and the souls flowed into the maelstrom.

A figure shot in my direction and then stood next to me.

"What are you doing here?" The reptile asked.

I stared down through the ceiling of a ward in a semi-lit hospital building as I flew around the dark, cobweb-filled rafters in the attic. Two women were attending to a woman lying, pregnant, on a hospital bed. I felt myself about to be tugged down, but stepped aside as another soul passed me.

"Nice try, "I said as I grabbed the slimy, scaled skin of the lizard, "trying to get me out of the way by being born into the physical plane!"

"Fuck you!" Hissed the reptile.

I pulled the lizard round, so I was gazing into its green eyes. "What are you up to here?"

"Nothing to do with you!"

"Looks as if you're stealing human souls," I said as I clamped my hand over the head of the reptile, and we shot off into the sky.

I was walking along Helen Street past the Victoria Bar, I was sixteen. A local hard-man, Ferdy, fell out of the pub and looked at me. "You!" he shouted, "come here!"

I stood and was inquisitive enough to wonder what he was wanting. After a moment I felt fear flow through my body as he approached me, and I ran off past the railway station. After a while I ducked into an entry and then peeped back along the street I had ran along. To my horror I saw Ferdy come galloping towards me.

I shook from my dream and walked out and grabbed the menacing thug. Then throwing him to the ground I growled, "I'm getting fed up of your mind games lizard!"

The reptile hissed as he looked up at me, "you people of the visible are so susceptible to mind control!"

"You forget that I'm not alive in the visible light world." I said as I grabbed the entity around the neck, "ah well, time to tidy up this mess!" I continued after a pause.

Throwing the beast up into the sky he flashed into another dimension. I then rose and hovered with my arms out as I reversed the flow of souls.

After all the spirits returned I went back to the quiet darkness of the cemetery and landed on a junction where paths met.

"Who are you?" said a gravelly voice.

I spun round to see the man I had encountered in Springfield Park.

"I am the Guardian of the Realms."

"Why here in this graveyard?"

"Irony! This is my hometown. I have relatives buried in this cemetery," I said looking around the darkened headstones. "Whence do you come?" I asked looking back, but there was no one there.

"Ah well, time to go." I said, stepping into another dimension.

Rage

“Give me your money you fat bastard!” said Kenny Thom as he stood threateningly over me.

“Okay, just don’t hit me” I squealed as I handed over my dinner money.

“You pathetic little wanker,” he said as he shook his open fist in the masturbating sign.

Then, watching as he and his mates walked over the school playground and terrorised another kid, an acute anger built up in me something I had never felt before.

Five years on, and I stood behind the hedge in Baxter Park in the twilight of the September evening as Thom waved goodbye to his friends. I felt the rage take hold of me with the sight of the bastard and I felt the solidity of the baseball bat in my hands. I ran up behind him checking from side to side for witnesses, of which there were none, and struck him on the back of the head. He fell onto the grass. I then pushed the bat into my belt before releasing a torrent of kicks and punches leaving the bastard unconscious and bleeding.

I never saw him again. There was a huge hunt for the perpetrator, but no one was found. The police believed he had been set upon by a gang from out of town searching for money, and a cash-grabbing bully was the ideal target.

The rage never possessed me again until I was thirty and a parent.

I was walking over a road crossing with my eighteen-month-old son Billy in my arms when a red BMW coupe came speeding up and pulled up a few inches from me. I sauntered over as a young woman sitting in the driver’s seat gave me the wanker sign. I noted the registration as she sped away.

After much searching over a few weeks I found the car parked in the driveway of a large house in a well-to-do area of the town. I made a mental note of the address. Returning at night, I followed the car in my old Ford as it pulled out of the driveway keeping the picture of the wanker sign in my mind.

The BMW stopped to pick up a young man in the centre of town before parking at a hotel on the outskirts. I then waited for an hour and a half before the pair left the hotel bar and re-entered the car. I followed them to the darkened seafront where they parked in the empty promenade. Passing the BMW I parked further along the road. I then turned off the engine and stared at the sea for twenty minutes before pulling on a full face balaclava and a pair of leather gloves. I then left the car and headed into the darkness.

Seagulls screeched as I crept up to the rocking car. I pulled open the passengers door to witness a writhing couple.

“What the fuck!” shouted the male as I pulled him off the screaming female and head butted him. I laughed at his shrinking penis as I lifted him up above my head and then walking toward the sea I threw him over the promenade wall.

I returned to the car where the female was pulling up her clothes in the driver’s seat and trying to put the key in the ignition. I grabbed the key and threw it over the seawall.

“What is it you want?” she screamed. “I’ll get money for you from my father.”

“I don’t want your money you silly little girl. I want retribution!”

She opened the driver’s door and ran, in bare feet, toward the cliffs. Following along the darkened walkway, I watched her shadow run up the path that led to the top of Whiting Ness—the start of the cliffs.

I followed up the path and walked along the cliff top path watching the running shadow head along the footpath of a sea stack before ducking out of sight.

“Where are you?” I taunted as I walked to where I knew she was hiding.

The wind rushed through the tufts of grass as I stood on the path staring out at the moon-silvered sea. Then she stood up and shouted: “Leave me alone you....”

She slid down the shrub strewn cliff top and hung on to a ledge by her fingertips over the writhing sea. I rushed over and, crouching down, I said: “Give me your hand.”

With one hand slipping she raised her other hand. I made to grasp her, but instead of clutching her hand I did the masturbating hand movement.

For months I felt miserable as the services searched for the missing daughter of the bank manager, Henry Grieg. The police had drawn a blank as to why her car was found on the promenade and a male body on the foreshore.

One day I was walking down a street when I watched a youth threaten an old woman.

“Stop that!” I shouted as I ran toward the youth, who spun and stabbed me in the abdomen. I fell back shocked and hit the ground.

Rising out of my body, I looked at my bleeding stomach and thought- surely this isn't where it ends!

Then I turned to the youth who was laughing and, as he turned back to the old woman, he gave my body the wanker sign. I felt the rage draw me back into my body.

Falling Leaves

The sun shone between dashing white clouds as Charles Grey made his way across Cathedral Close toward the massive West Front of Peterborough Cathedral. A group of boys dressed in red were standing with their parents. He sighed climbing the few steps and unlocked the outer doors as he had done every day for the past ten years since becoming the Caretaker.

“Okay, come on in,” he said as he entered the darkened foyer. He then unlocked a pair of heavy, wooden doors and pushed them open.

The boys followed him in and then ran toward the Choir area shouting excitedly. Most of the grown-ups left after shouting instructions.

Inside, the Cathedral smelled like a mausoleum as Grey flicked switches and then made his way down the right side of the Nave. A soft light shone through ancient windows and illuminated the pillars of ancient arches. Suddenly a scream made him stop and look toward the area under the Tower. A boy was pointing upwards. Other choirboys ran from the Choir area and screamed as they stared up into the Tower.

The Caretaker entered the Tower area and gasped at the large pool of blood on the tiled floor. He stared at the choirboys who were pointing upwards. He raised his head up and gazed in horror at the white, distorted face of Dean David Ellis, which stared at him with dead eyes. Blood was dripping from the forehead and nose, and the tongue hung out of the side of the open mouth. The Caretaker jumped back in shock, his mind not being able to register why the Dean was staring at him upside-down from mid-air. Then he saw that the body hung from above on an upturned cross.

“You boys!” he shouted, coming back to his senses, “back outside... now!”

The few grown-ups who had remained herded the boys out of the building.

John Fellows, the organist, ran up to where the Caretaker was standing and put his two hands over his mouth as he looked upward. “Oh poor David!” he cried.

Charles Grey pulled his mobile out of his pocket and rang 999.

“How could someone do this?” Fellows asked no one in particular as the Caretaker was talking on his phone.

“Where did the cross come from?” Grey asked as he finished the call and pushed his mobile back into his pocket.

The two men then looked around along the Nave toward the West Front door.

“It’s gone! The Hanging Christ!” the organist shouted as he pointed above the Choir area.

“The Dean’s strung to the cross from the Hanging Christ!” Charles Grey growled.

Detective Inspector Alexander Kelly threw down his newspaper as his boss, Detective Superintendent Douglas Bell walked into the CID office of Thorpe Wood Police Station. Kelly ran a hand across his cropped, red hair and then finished his coffee and casually threw the paper cup into the litter bin.

“Sandy.” Bell said, shaking his head and gazing at the floor as he approached Kelly’s desk.

“Sir?”

“The Dean up at the Cathedral. Murdered, strung up or something!”

“What?”

“Will you and Phil head up there.”

“Shit! Okay sir,” said Kelly rising from his seat looking at Detective Sergeant Philip Metcalfe.

The pair left the station in Metcalfe’s vehicle.

“Looks like we’ll get some proper police work on this one Sandy?” Metcalfe said as he drove.

“Proper police work! said Kelly in his strong Glaswegian accent. “You lot down here wouldn’t know proper police work if you found it in your soup!” continued Kelly who had learnt his trade in the East End of Glasgow; his face still showed the scars of breaking up bar brawls and separating rival football fans.

The Cathedral Close was packed with vehicles, and the flashing blue lights of five police vans made the Gothic West Front look like something from a carnival's ghost train frontage as the detectives climbed the steps.

"DI Kelly and DS Metcalfe," said Kelly to the copper standing at the main door as the men showed their warrant cards.

"Okay sir," said the policeman standing aside.

The detectives pulled on shoe covers and investigation gloves and then entered the Cathedral. Inside, men in white suits were dusting and searching. A man in a green suit was standing under the Tower gazing upwards and discussing something with a uniform Sergeant.

Kelly and Metcalfe strode down the Nave and joined the two men.

"Jesus!" Metcalfe said as he looked up.

"DI Kelly and DS Metcalfe" said Kelly to the man in the green suit, but with eyes on the hanging corpse.

"I'm Doctor Walker—the Pathologist."

"Of course. Hello, sir."

Kelly walked around the area of the Tower base while looking at the victim, "never seen anything like this Dave," he said to the Sergeant.

"Hell no Sandy," replied the Sergeant looking at the corpse.

"Who found the body?" Kelly asked.

"The Caretaker. Along with choirboys," said the sergeant.

"Shit!" said Metcalfe, shaking his head. "Where is he?"

"Shit's the word all right. He's outside having a fag and a cup of tea. His names Charles Grey.

"Okay thanks Dave, we'll have a word. Will you get your guys to ask questions around the general area." Kelly then looked at the Pathologist. "Not much point in asking for a time Doctor,"

"No, I must get the poor chap down for that."

"Yes, of course."

DS Metcalfe moved round to where Kelly was standing as the other two men moved away. "What do you reckon sir?"

"I don't know. Are we looking at the work of one strong man or a group? I mean the weight of the cross? And the victim looks to have been hauled up with that wire which goes over that bar on the side of the Tower and back down attaching to the side wall over there," said Kelly pointing to the side of the Nave next to the Tower.

The two men looked at the side of the Nave wall where the wire attached as a small, plump man approached them.

"Can I speak to whoever is in charge?" asked the man whose lower lip quivered when he spoke.

"That would be me sir. I'm Detective Inspector Kelly."

"I want everything done that can be done Inspector."

"And you are, sir?"

"I'm John Balfour—the Chancellor."

"Okay then, sir. Everything will be done to find out who did this."

"I hope so," said Balfour as he turned and walked back along the Nave, "I hope so!"

Kelly and Metcalfe walked back to where the victim hung.

"Wasn't there gruesome murders in cathedrals years ago that were never solved? I'm sure I read about them. They were in the 1990's, before my time, said Metcalfe in his thick East Midlands accent.

"Yeah, there was. Three of them," said Kelly as he raised his head and looked at the dead clergy man's blood sodden face, "thing is, if this is the work of the same person or persons, what's returned them to their killing ways?"

The uniform Sergeant and Charles Grey, the Caretaker, walked along the Nave to where the two detectives were standing.

"Sandy, this is Mr Grey—the Caretaker," said the Sergeant.

"Ah, Mr Grey, can you show us how the mechanism for lowering the cross works?"

"Yes, it's over here," said the Caretaker walking over to the side of the Nave.

Kelly signalled to uniformed officers while he watched. And then, taking Grey along the Nave toward the front door, he asked: “Can I have the names and addresses of anyone apart from yourself who lowers the cross for any reason?”

“Yes, of course. They’re mainly friends of mine and are volunteers.”

At Thorpe Wood Police Station Kelly discovered from his computer that there were indeed three unsolved murders in three cathedrals in England. The first was the murder of a member of the clergy at Durham Cathedral, found in a small chapel within the Cathedral, in 1992. Second murder victim in 1994 was found sitting in the Choir stalls of York Cathedral. The third murder happened in the same year at Lincoln Cathedral. In all the murders the victims were beaten and strangled then placed at the crime scene.

Kelly then phoned up Durham Police and was put in contact with the detective, now retired, who was in charge of the first murder—DCI Ian Holding. He found out that although the forensics were primitive compared with today, there was nothing on which to go. A modern day forensic test was carried out on a piece of clothing from the first case a few years ago and again nothing found.

“I was at all three crime scenes, and I reckon that they were by the same killer—a man driven by the need to destroy something from his past not, as others thought, to attack a certain religion,” said Holding staring at Kelly, who had travelled to his home in Durham.

“The Durham Police questioned thousands including several occult groups, Hells Angels and even Heavy Metal fanatics all with the same negative result,” he continued, “the individual wasn’t a member of any of those groups—he was outwardly normal, but twisted inside like many I suppose.” He then gazed out his living room window. “I thought he was dead until this latest murder, if it’s done by the same person.”

“Do you know of any reason he would start again?” Kelly asked.

“Could be many factors: something annoying him or something cropping up from his past maybe.”

“I saw from the files that there were a few suspects, do you have any leaning toward any of them?”

“There was Gerard O’Neil, a loner from Hartlepool, who despised us and Protestants. A Scotsman thrown out of a radical Irish group in Glasgow for his views. He moved to Hartlepool and worked in the fishing industry. He was picked up after telling someone in a public house he hated Protestants and that he murdered the clergyman at Durham. An alibi was, however, provided by his partner—a woman he stayed with. Other names were John Daniels a married postman and Luke Cunningham a vicar’s son both of whom had strong alibis.”

The retired policeman also told Kelly that they rounded up the known burglars in the region on the assumption that the crime was a burglary that went wrong. Although there was nothing taken the surprised criminal could have strangled the clergyman and made it look like an anti-religion murder. Kelly also found out the names of two retired detectives: one who headed the York investigation and the other - the Lincoln case.

While driving, Kelly thought of his childhood where he and his brother Sean feared their father coming home to the family’s flat in the east end of Glasgow drunk after an all-day session. Their mother would make them hide in a dirty cupboard and they would hear the man beat their mother until he fell into a drunken slumber. This often happened if he made it home without being arrested for fighting.

Kelly sighed as he remembered one morning the two boys were sitting having their breakfast in the grubby kitchen when their father stumbled in, sat down and demanded a cup of tea before spewing up blood. He was taken away to hospital, but pronounced dead on arrival much to the relief of the boys and their mother.

Metcalfe and Kelly found out of two other suspects from the two retired detectives. The first was David Johnson a travelling salesman from York who had a record for violence. He was seen by a witness around the Minster at the time of the murder, but his wife provided a semi-tenable alibi. Second was Gordon James a bed-and-breakfast owner from Mablethorpe. Police received a tip-off that he was responsible for the Lincoln murder, but an alibi provided

by his partner in the business cleared him. The tip-off, it was assumed, was made by a jealous gay lover. The Precentor murdered at Lincoln Cathedral was gay.

The day after Kelly returned from Durham his phone rang as he reached his desk in the CID room.

“Hello—DI Kelly.”

“Sergeant Jones—Ely Police here. We’ve been alerted that a body has been found in the Cathedral here!”

“Okay. I’m on my way.”

Kelly and Metcalfe drove to Ely and drew up outside the Cathedral as a uniform Sergeant and a Constable left the building.

“We’re here to investigate the body found inside,” said Kelly

“Oh yeah there’s a body hanging inside okay,” said the Sergeant.

Puzzled, they enter the building to find a dummy hanging from an arch halfway along the Nave. A large card hung around its neck saying ‘abortion kills.’

“The receptionist was first in this morning and panicked when she saw a hanging body due to what had happened in Peterborough,” said the Sergeant who had followed the detectives inside the building.

Back at Thorpe Wood Police Station the two detectives and other CID officers tracked down the suspects from the previous killings as they were getting nowhere with local criminals and occult groups. They reckoned a good place to start was with David Johnson the travelling salesman as he could travel about the country with no one keeping track.

Kelly and Metcalfe found out that Johnson, now a company director in York, had remarried. Kelly suggested they visit Johnson’s ex-wife in Knaresborough where she lived with a male partner.

Lisa Toner told them that Johnson was away a lot, but after staying with the man for eight years she did not think he would kill someone despite having a record for violence in his earlier days.

They called on the company that Johnson ran and received a frosty reception. But alibis from several employees for the time of the murder were given.

The detectives found out that Gerard O’Neil now lived alone in Sunderland and was unemployed. They drove north and talked to him in his council house.

“You lot are all Protestants and Freemasons,” he said to the men from a drug-sodden brain, which brought a well-used glower from Kelly.

“Come on now Gerard—you can do better than that,” said Metcalfe.

“Why don’t you fuck off and ask that whore I used to stay with in Hartlepool.”

The detectives then headed south to Mablethorpe, a seaside resort on the Lincolnshire coast, where they found an ageing Gordon James running the Admiral Benbow Hotel with his partner of five years. They found out from his partner that James was behind the bar on the night of the murder in Peterborough. James himself became cagey when asked about his previous partner, so the policemen left and traced Derek Rimes living in Sutton on Sea.

Rimes told Kelly and Metcalfe that he wasn’t too sure to what extent, but James knew the murdered clergyman at Lincoln Cathedral.

“I was called to a barney between two gays when I was in uniform. Jeez, they were vicious. The place they lived in was totally trashed.” Metcalfe said as they drove back to Peterborough.

The news that the person behind the hanging dummy in Ely Cathedral was an anti-abortionist naturally did not surprise Kelly. The police in Ely were holding Frederick Colson, who was protesting against the Bishop of Ely’s pro-abortion stance, for questioning. Kelly wasted no time in getting there and subjecting the man to rigorous questioning. The detective told him that at the least he would be charged with breaking and entering and with wasting police time. Interestingly, Kelly found out that Colson had no alibi for the time of the murder at Peterborough Cathedral and held him longer.

Kelly entered his house after a long day and kissed his wife.

“There’s a package for you in the kitchen Sandy,” she said as she climbed the stairs.

“A package—I never ordered anything!”

He opened the brown paper package to find a book, ‘Falling Leaves’ by Edward Vance. A small note dropped out which read: ‘ You were the lucky one’.

The book was about two boys: one, brought up by an authoritarian father who beat him and told him he was useless. The other brought up by a father who just didn’t care. First boy, when he grew up, hit back at his father by destroying what the man idolized - the medical profession. The son, started murdering doctors. Ironically the other boy grew-up to be a doctor

Kelly put the whole package in a sample bag and sealed it.

The next day Metcalfe’s desk phone rang.

“Metcalfe?”

“ Phil—it’s Mick Taylor-Lincolnshire Police.

“Mickey! How you doing?”

“Fine. Listen, that gay hotel owner Gordon James is being charged with attempted murder. He tried to beat Derek Rimes to death and would have done so if Rimes’ neighbours hadn’t intervened.”

Kelly and Metcalfe travelled back to Lincolnshire to discover that James found out that Rimes had told them he knew the murdered gay clergyman. They questioned James, who told them that the gay community was much more enclosed in those days, and everyone knew everyone else in a certain area. He told them that Rimes knew him as well.

The detectives then talked to one of Rimes’ neighbours who told them he heard arguing and then crashing noises. He intervened when he heard Rimes screaming for help. He said that it took him and Ian the neighbour from the other side to stop James from throttling Rimes.

Back in Thorpe Wood Kelly was working on his computer as Detective Superintendent Bell entered the CID room.

“Anti-abortionist groups are demonstrating outside Ely Police Station Sandy; so the word is either charge Frederick Colson or let him go,” he said as he hovered over Kelly’s desk.

That night Kelly soaked in a hot bath and considered his options. He would release Colson with no charge just a kick up the arse. The book: Was it a cry for help? Strict father! I was the lucky one?

The house lay on a quiet cul-de-sac in Durham. Metcalfe rung the bell and then looked in the lower windows. After a few minutes the two policemen headed around the back and a neighbour told them the owner had been in a mental hospital for several years - Dronell Hospital, a low security institution in Leicestershire.

The detectives drove back south and Kelly headed on to the hospital.

Led to a day room in a modern ward Kelly introduced himself to Luke Cunningham who was sitting absent-mindedly watching television. The patient, who seemed to be in poor physical health, looked up and smiled then looked down again. He gave one word answers to questions the policeman asked him.

Kelly was told that Cunningham had Bipolar Disorder. He also found out he was first admitted to a high security hospital in 1995 after his father died. He was then stepped down to medium security in 2008 and finally to low in 2012. In low security, patients such as Cunningham are allowed out when they want but supervised.

Kelly called Ian Holding and was told that he knew Cunningham was in a mental hospital, because he went crazy after his father died, but the alibi for the Durham murder from his father the vicar still stood. He also told Kelly that he knew the boy’s father and that he was a bit strict with him. The boy had a hard time of it, but was no killer. Kelly told Holding that the reason the murders had begun again was because the killer wasn’t finished.

In the CID room Metcalfe asked Kelly why he thought the murderer hadn’t finished. Kelly took a felt pen and strode up to a blank, white board and wrote out:

- 1 Durham-Canon
- 2 York-Chancellor
- 3 Lincoln-Precentor
- 4 Peterborough-Dean

“Right Phil. What do you see?”

“The cathedral murders.”

“Look at the victims. The murderer is working through cathedral dignitaries! Each victim has a higher standing than the previous!”

“Oh yeah!”

“Now, looking at the list, what position is next?”

“Shit!”

“Look at the geographical sequence.”

“Yeah—north to south.”

“Question is: What cathedral in the south of England?”

The forensics on the book wrapping and the note came back, and an arrest warrant for Luke Cunningham issued, but when the arresting officers entered Dronell Hospital he was gone.

Kelly strolled into the CID room and sat on the edge of Metcalfe’s desk with a paper cup of steaming coffee.

“Listen Phil, I’m going to Canterbury tomorrow because I’ve found out that the Archbishop is to be in the Cathedral tomorrow, and I’m pretty certain that Cunningham will be there.

What, on your own?”

“I don’t want a strong police presence to scare Cunningham off,” Kelly said as he took a sip of coffee. “Tomorrow, could you tell Bell that I’ve gone to Lincoln to interview someone?”

“Okay mate.”

A storm set into the south of England as the detective arrived in Canterbury. He parked his car and walked to the Cathedral surrounded by people. Kelly surveyed the precinct area and then, seeing nothing out of place, he headed into the building.

A mass of people were following a guide around on a tour. Other people were strolling around marvelling at the building as, outside, the wind howled.

Kelly walked along the Nave then through the Quire not really knowing what to expect when he noticed a vicar kneeling in the Trinity Chapel before an altar. The man glanced round at Kelly and then returned his gaze back to the altar. The chapel filled with people as the tour flooded in from the Nave. Kelly looked desperately through the crowd, but the clergyman was gone. He pushed his way past the tourists and caught the sight of the Vicar leaving the Chapel. Following the man Kelly saw him slip through the door to the Bell Harry Tower.

As the detective walked up to the Tower door an attendant stepped in front of him and told him that the Tower was closed due to the weather. Kelly flashed his warrant card and instructed the man to allow no one else through.

After climbing some 200 steps Kelly burst out onto the roof of the Tower. The wind was very strong and howled around the turrets. The heavy rain was making the roof surface slippery.

Kelly searched around, but couldn’t find anyone. He feared that Cunningham had jumped or fallen. He bent over the small perimeter wall to look over the north side when a strong gust caught him from the side and rendered him unbalanced. A shadow appeared from nowhere and pushed him over the side and then caught him in a powerful grip before he fell.

After he caught his breath, the detective looked up into the rain-lashed face of Cunningham, who looked much bigger and stronger than the man he had seen in the hospital. Luke Cunningham put one of Kelly’s hands onto a decorative opening in the wall, but otherwise held him where he was.

“Why the cathedrals man?” Kelly asked.

“The only time my father allowed me out of my room when I was a child was to accompany him to a cathedral where I would stand around waiting while he spoke to Deans and the like. I grew to hate the places.”

Cunningham looked up into the pouring rain. “Your father—did you really hate him?”

“Yes,” answered Kelly after a pause. “The Book—Falling Leaves?”

“The only book my father allowed in the house was the bible. When I was allowed out of the house in my late teens I went to the library and I found Falling Leaves—it struck a chord!”

Kelly gazed with pity into the man’s wild eyes as his mobile rang in his pocket, which was just audible over the sound of the wind. Cunningham became suspicious and suddenly leapt over the top of Kelly shouting that his father beat him to drive out the demons!

Metcalf and Superintendent Bell were in the CID office of Thorpe Wood Police Station along with Kelly who was standing staring out of the window. Bell summed-up by saying that Cunningham murdered these men to gain a kind of revenge on his strict father—the Vicar, and that DCI Holding was a friend of the family. And when the father died, the son was committed.

“ Yes,” said Kelly, “it was more of a desperate cry to be noticed from a sick mind.”

“What of the supervision at the low security hospital?” Metcalfe asked.

“The staff were just covering their arses—there was no supervision. The patients about to be discharged were free to come and go as they pleased.” Kelly answered as he looked at the two men. “Cunningham was seriously ill with this bipolar disorder and the murders stopped when he was in the high security hospital. And he gave himself up to me—the son of another kind of terrorizing Father. How he found out about my back ground is anybody's guess. But there was a lot more to him than just another murderer.”