

The Infinite Doctrine

Vol. 1

5 Short Stories Written By Scott Donnelly

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The Infinite Doctrine: Vol. 1

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“Imagination will often carry us to worlds that never were. But without it, we go nowhere.” – CARL SAGAN

“You see things; and say ‘why?’ But I dream things that never were; and I say ‘why not?’ -GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For while knowledge defines all we currently know and understand, imagination points to all we might discover and create.” – ALBERT EINSTEIN

IN THE DEAD OF WINTER

It was supposed to be a simple ‘hold down the fort’ mission. I didn’t expect it to turn into a game of survival. And it couldn’t have happened in a colder time. The winds were heavy; blowing the falling snow into my face, making it sting. The howl of the wind made it hard to hear my squad - wherever they were. I sat in the snow bunker we’d dug out by hand, gripping my machine gun and pulling my ski mask down over my face. It was the dead of winter and we were fighting a war.

I had seen a few of my team member’s fall to the ground after being shot; I had known these men for years. But I had to stay strong and fight my way out. I, as well as the rest of my squad, couldn’t lose this battle. It was out of the question.

Through the blowing wind and drifting snow, I could hear footsteps crunching on the ice outside of the bunker. The bunker was cold and small but it certainly hid me well from the enemy. The crunching in the snow was getting closer. This was it - I could fight my way out or die trying. At this point in the war, it didn’t matter to me.

I gripped my machine gun with my gloved hands and waited - staring out of the bunker into the looming dusk. I heard enemy soldiers yelling. It was obvious they had spotted more of my soldiers. Their yelling was followed by the loud pops of their pistols and the returning fire of machine guns. I closed my eyes

until the gunfire passed. Then the footsteps started again; closer than before.

I leaned forward to the opening of the bunker and peered out. Three enemy soldiers stood to my left, holding their weapons, looking at me.

I screamed a lionhearted scream and lifted my machine gun towards the center soldier. I gripped the trigger and didn't hesitate to pull it back until it scrapped the metal behind it. The ensuing blasts from the gun were of a sonorous and fierce nature; one in which I held back no mercy. The center soldier dropped to the ground like a rock and as I swayed the fire spewing machine gun side to side, the other two dropped without even enough time to raise their weapons.

I gathered myself and stood up, looking into the vast, snow covered land. I saw where a couple of my men had bravely stood and taken their last breath. I also saw an approaching band of enemy soldiers running in my direction. I glanced around again, noticing that I was the only survivor in my squad. I faced the oncoming men and took a firm stance. I raised my gun up to them, but they were already firing on me. I ducked and rolled in the snow. Was I hit? I wasn't sure. Between the cold, the blowing wind and the excitement, I didn't even feel if I was shot or not. Forcing myself back to my feet, I aimed my machine gun at them and began to pump out round after round into them. One of them dropped immediately. Another showed weakness as he

grabbed his shoulder and rolled around in the snow. The others keep pursuing me. I looked through my crosshairs; explosions lit up the dimming sky behind them. The spotlight was on me now. As they cracked off shot after shot at me, I began to race towards them, holding the trigger back on my gun.

The deafening scream of the gunfire was then overpowered by someone calling my name.

I saw the storming soldiers ahead of me stop and put down their weapons. In a state of confusion, I turned around, and peered through the falling snow. Was one of my men still alive? Then through the snow and the overcast of the approaching night, I saw my mom standing in the front door.

“Tommy! Dinner!” she yelled to me. She had been calling my name for a couple minutes, but I guess I let my imagination keep running. I turned back to all my neighborhood friends and dropped my toy gun.

“I’ll see you guys tomorrow!” I shouted.

They replied with the same, and I ran up to my house to have dinner with my family. The war was over for now, but hopefully we’d have another snow day tomorrow.

THE MAN WHO SPOKE WONDERS

It was very cloudy. Looked almost as if it was about to rain. But that didn't stop me from taking Kona for a walk. Kona was my beautiful Labrador retriever; chocolate with a white belly. We took walks almost every day depending upon the weather.

On this particular day, I was having problems with my ankle. I had twisted it a day earlier playing touch football with some friends. There was a bench in the park Kona and I was walking through. It was close to the road, at the bus stop. We made our way to it, and I tied Kona's leash around the leg of the freshly painted bench. I sat there for a moment, cracking my ankle back and forth, trying to get the pain to subside. It worked sometimes, but others it hurt worse. This time it seemed to be working.

There was a spit of rain that hit my jeans, followed by a very light mist. It wasn't enough to make me want to leave. It actually felt good, since the temperature was well into the mid 80s. It was warmer than it should have been this time of year.

To my right, across the street, there was a construction truck. Three men were standing outside the truck with the sewer grate open. They had a ladder going down into it, and a few tools lying besides the orange cones they used to direct the traffic around them. The three men, probably in their 40s or so, were yelling back and forth at each other, swearing up a storm. I was never one to use swear words, as I didn't see the point. There are

plenty of other words you can use to express yourself without being vulgar. From where I was sitting, and what I had seen, none of the three men seemed to be in the right - it was a pointless fight.

To my left, was the playground. There were not very kids out this time of year; probably too hot for them. But there were two smaller children, around ten years of age, falling victim to a trio of older kids. It was common for older kids to show their age and bully their minors around. It showed that you had power over someone, and that's the only reason someone would bully. Deep down, they don't want to hurt anyone; they're just looking for attention.

I felt a thud next to my right, and turned to see an older gentleman had plopped down on the bench besides me. He was probably in his 70s, and had very thin gray hair. He was dressed nicely in a suit and bow tie, and his face was complemented with very thick-framed glasses. He carried an umbrella at his side, and had set it horizontally across his lap. He stared straight ahead and gently tapped his fingers on the umbrella.

The man turned to the right and looked across the street at the three workers swearing at each other. The man smiled, and then glanced to the left, looking past me. I knew he was staring at the children bickering at each other, so I joined him in looking. The two older boys were in the middle of pushing the younger ones. I

moved a little, as I was about to get up and stop the bullies, and then was stopped by a hand on my shoulder.

The older man had his hand on my shoulder. I sat back down on the bench, and turned to him as he retracted his hand.

“You can’t stop kids from being kids.” He said.

“I know, I was just going to try and -” I began, but was immediately stopped by the old man.

“You have kid’s fighting to your left, and adults fighting to your right. Don’t you always find this happening?”

“Sure. It’s human nature.” I responded to his question.

“I have too been sick of this behavior, for quite some time now. You can’t change the world. But the world can change you. Most of the time, for the worse.” He said.

I sat there, not knowing exactly how to respond to this man. He was probably just talking for the heck of it; showing his age perhaps? But his words made sense. The man tapped his chest, suggesting he had something in his suit pocket.

“I have my ticket. I am taking trip away from this place.” He told me, as I wondered where he could have been going on this bus. It just went across town.

“You visiting family?” I asked him.

“Sure am. I’m going to where I use to live. A place where this,” he pointed to the kids and then the adults, “won’t be happening. It’s a much nicer place.”

I thought about how a place like that would be. This man, who I have never met before, could really make me think. He continued:

“I’m taking this trip to get away from the world’s problems. A vacation I am not sure I want to come back from. A place where there is no fighting between each other. A place where the sky is always blue, and the grass is always the greenest it can be. Where the clouds above you hold endless possibilities.”

There was no place like this, and I was starting to think he might have been a little crazy. I wanted to know what destination the bus ticket in his suit pocket actually said. It was probably just the next township over. However, his speaking intrigued me. He had a very smooth voice, and it was almost soothing listening to this man speak. I let him continue:

“I want to wake up in the morning,” he said, “and not have to worry about the dangers, problems and stress that lay ahead of me for the day, you know?”

“I don’t think you can ever escape stress.” I told him.

“You’re wrong. You can escape stress. You just have to learn how to deal with it first. Then the rest is simple. Love is another reason I’m taking this trip. I’ve never been in love, and I know for a fact that this trip will supply me with enough love.” He said as he looked down the street. Traffic was held up down the street for some reason, and there was a police barricade. I looked with

him, and could see the bus that was going to be stopping here was stuck in the traffic.

The man turned to me. “Looks like an accident -probably just someone in a rush to go nowhere. It happens all the time. People put total strangers in danger just to accomplish something for themselves. Is that what life has come to in this day?”

I just nodded my head. I agreed with what he was saying. People now a days are ridiculous. Then I thought of what he said a few minutes ago, and asked, “You have never been in love?” “No. Never. I mean, I was married for 55 years, but was that love? Or just a way to pass the time?”

Now he had me hooked. This guy was either crazy, or the most intellectual man I have ever spoke too. “What do you mean? Time passer?”

“You know. Someone to be with until you finally get to take this ‘trip’? Trust me. Everything you have every wanted will be at the end of this trip. The happiness shared by all. The smiles. The inspiration. The incredible feeling of success and amorousness.” He said.

By this time, I was stunned. I wanted to know where this place was he was talking about. “Sir, if you don’t mind my asking. What does your bus ticket say?”

“Why do you wonder? Do you too want to go?”

“Yes. This place sounds like the perfect place to be.”

“If I were you,” the old man began, “I would get your ticket, and go as soon as you can, and while you’re young. I should have taken this trip many, many years ago.” He said smiling. The man took a deep breath and stared straight ahead again.

I heard the sounds of cars getting close. I turned and saw that the traffic had broken up and the bus was on its way. Some cars were already passing by us. I turned to the old man. “It was nice talking to you sir. Here comes your bus, and I hope you have a great time wherever it is you’re going.”

The old man turned and looked me in the eye. “Thank you young man, I will enjoy myself. But I’m not taking that bus.”

I must have had a confused look on my face, as he stared back at me with a hint of a ‘you-didn’t-know-that?’ look.

“But you said you had a ticket out of here?” I asked. The old man responded by opening up his suit coat and revealing a pistol.

“I do have a ticket out of here.”

ONE TOUCH

It's late, and I am finally lying in bed. In the dark, with no worries the rest of the weekend. A long day at work, followed by dinner with the family, and watching my cousins' football game at the high school. It was time to call it a night. I'm sure I would be able to get to sleep with no help, but it was just normal for me to flip on the TV, and let lights in the dark room, and dull volume put me to sleep. But, like I said. That's normal. I think I will try something different tonight. Maybe pop on my headphones, and let some light alternative put me to sleep. I grab my headphones from my nightstand, put them over my ears, and flip on my MP3 player. Now it was time to relax.

The music has been playing for almost an hour. My conscious fades in and out, and I see visions of dreams I could have had. The annoyingness of a repeated song, finally grabs my attention. I open my eyes, and touch a button on the MP3 player. It illuminates in a blue fog, and when my eyes finally adjust, I see that I have accidentally hit the constant repeat button. Disoriented from the fading in and out of dreams, I press another button, which I didn't really mean to press. My settings screen comes up.

Come to think of it, I don't think I have ever messed with the settings. What kind of settings could you possibly need for listening to synced music from your computer? I fumble with the

buttons for a moment, then I hear a voice. Two voices actually. It's two women talking.

"We're going to do this now. Just as instructed." the first woman said. The second woman sounded a little younger in her voice, and replied with, "I understand. How are we going to take this one?"

"We're just going to grab him, and leave. One touch is all it takes."

I couldn't understand what I was hearing. This wasn't one of the songs - or anything - I put on my MP3 player. By now I was fully awake. I yanked the headphones out of my ears, held down the off button on the player, and dropped them on the floor next to my bed. I yawned, and then rolled over onto my side, and shut my eyes. Silence was what I needed.

"Are you ready?" The first woman said. My eyes shot open, and I rolled over. I began to feel slightly faint. Who was talking? It's late at night, all the lights are off in my house, and there should be no one else in here but me. Intruders?

The second woman answered, "Almost. I dread doing this. I hate doing this."

"I know you do. None of us like it. But it's what's got to be done."

"I know."

"Come on then, lets take him".

I looked at my closed door, where a bright light illuminated from beyond the other side of it.

“Oh God.” I said, as I sat up in my bed. I had all my focus on the door. The light grew brighter and brighter. I heard the women talking about.

“Just one touch. Then we leave.”

“Gotcha.”

The door began to slightly. I screamed out, “Get out! Or I’ll call the police!” I began feeling faint again - that screaming seemed to take my breath away. Were they leaking some kind of gas in the room or something? What did they want?

The door opened more and more. The light flooded in, and I finally saw the form of the two women. Two beautiful women. Absolutely gorgeous. They were both wearing white dresses. Though their beauty was that of angels, I was still afraid of what they had planned. I felt dizzy, and as they were walking towards me, and reaching out for me, I closed my eyes and tightly held them shut. I could still see the light on the other side of my eyelids.

“Grab him!” One woman yelled.

“One touch! That’s all it takes.” the other woman said.

I felt one of their hands touch me on the shoulder, another on my chest. My ears began ringing, and I heard a defining pop come from inside my head.

Everything was silent. I opened my eyes back up, and looked down at myself, lying in bed. I looked to my side and saw the two beautiful women, smiling at me. I smiled back. I was home.

THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN TO HARDWICK

The sun had set on Hardwick, Arizona. Douglas Carter sat on a bench for two at the Hardwick train station. He was cold and numb, staring into space. On the bench next to him was a leather travel bag. Inside the bag, tucked away under a couple pairs of jeans, t-shirts, socks and underwear, was a blood stained hunting knife.

The crowd at the station had been gradually dying off, and was now down to just a few people scattered around. Douglas checked his train ticket. He was scheduled for the 10:05 train. It would take him to Phoenix where part two of his plan would be put into motion. Douglas adjusted his glasses, which were starting to slide down the bridge of his nose on small beads of sweat. He looked down at his bag and unzipped a side pocket. From it, he pulled out a small edition of The Bible. It had been burned on all corners.

Douglas opened The Bible and skimmed through the many pages. When he reached the back, there were two pages with no typed words – only hand written words. Douglas pulled a pen from his jacket pocket and placed the tip of it on one of the pages, just below a paragraph he had written earlier. He began to write another entry:

I sit here now, waiting for my 10:05 train to Phoenix. The Stallman's have no idea what is on it's way to their precious city. There are two more to take from this world during this night, and when the sun rises tomorrow morning in Phoenix, there will be none. Who ever are fortunate enough to find this information in the ass end of this beloved Bible, don't even try to understand me. You don't know me. No one does. – D.C.

Douglas Carter closed the book after thinking about what he had wrote for a while. He then opened it back up, and read the entry above it one more time. It was his favorite part:

I did it, but I can't remember it for Christ's sake. I want to remember so badly but it all went black afterwards. I remember grabbing the knife and holding it very tight. My gorgeous Lilly Stallman – the queen of the God damn world – didn't see it coming. It was quick – too quick. I should make it last longer next time. I will make it last longer next time. The parents of this whore will know how it should have felt. Lilly put up a fight – I didn't expect that. After she was carved, she was able to get one last hit in that made me fall back and hit my head – that's when it all went black. I can't remember details. –D.C.

Douglas slammed the book shut again and stuck it back into

the side pocket of his travel bag. He looked up. No one was around. The train station looked empty. Douglas jumped up, grabbed his bag and rushed over to the ticket office. He looked at his watch on the way: 11:47pm.

He came to a quick stop at the office and banged on the glass window. Moments later, the teller arrived. She slid the window open. "Can I help you, sir?"

"I missed my train. Is there another one leaving for Phoenix tonight?" Douglas asked, catching his breath.

The woman checked the schedule. "Yes. There is another one leaving in less than 15 minutes."

"Is it possible to trade in my ticket for that one?"

The woman hesitated, and finally smiled. She spoke in a friendly manner. "Well, you seem like one of the good ones. There aren't many of those left now days. Let me see what I can do for you. Can I have your ticket and ID please?"

Douglas cooperated with the woman and supplied her with all she needed. After a few moments on the computer, a new ticket printed out and she glance it over more than once. She then looked at Douglas and handed him the ticket and his ID. Her smile was gone.

"Here's your ticket. You are on the 12:00am train. It's on the other side of my office. Have a safe trip, sir."

Douglas was relieved. "Thank you so much ma'am. I really

appreciate it.”

He turned the corner of the office and saw the train sitting on the tracks, engine running. A man in a dark blue uniform stood by the train door. Douglas approached him and handed him the ticket. The man looked at the paper and allowed Douglas in.

The train was nice. It was clean and smelled like pine. The floors had blue velvet carpet, as well as every single seat. There was only one other man in the car with Douglas. He was a large, bald, black man. He sat near the front of the car and watched Douglas very carefully as he made his way to the back end.

Douglas sat down, and placed his travel bag on the seat next to him.

The black man looked back at Douglas, then faced forward again. He better mind his own damn business, Douglas thought.

The trains’ engines kicked into full gear right on time, and the door to the car was shut. It was midnight, and the train’s whistle sounded like a foghorn blasting through the station. The train began to move, and in no time, went shooting like a bullet into a darkened tunnel.

Douglas pulled out his Bible and read his entries over and over. The door at the front of the car opened, and Douglas panicked. He closed the book and stuffed it back into the bag. He looked ahead to see one of the train attendants standing in the front. He was a tall man with a clean-shaven face. His eyebrows

here thick and dark, and his face was very boney – almost sickly looking this man was. He too wore a dark blue uniform.

“Good evening – or morning depending upon how you look at it.” The man spoke with a very nasally voice. “Looks like the midnight train has an extremely light load tonight. You are the only two riding on the entire, 14-car train. I am Norris. If you need anything – anything at all – let me know. And hopefully if there are not any problems that arise, we will have you at your destination within an hour.”

Norris looked down to his right at the black man. “What’s your name, sir?”

The man took offense and looked up at him. “What does my name matter to you?” He asked in a deep, threatening tone.

Norris laughed. “I was just curious. It’s only going to be the three of us here for an hour or so. I figure, why not be on a first name basis?”

“You are not my friend. You don’t need to know my name.” The man turned around and looked angrily at Douglas. “You’re not my friend either, you hear that?”

Douglas nodded. Norris then looked up at him. “Can I know your name, sir?”

“Douglas.” He had no reason to hide his name – only what he’d done, and will do.

“Well, Douglas, if you need anything, just press the button on

the back of the seat in front of you, and I will be at your call.”

Norris left the car the way he came and shut the door.

For what seemed like a half an hour, Douglas stared out the window. All he could see was black, but he could still tell they were moving incredibly fast. Every so often, he got the feeling that the man in the front of the car was looking at him, but only for moments. Almost like he was on guard the whole time. But Douglas refused to look up at him to make sure. He didn't want to start any kind of confrontation. That was the last thing he needed.

A few minutes later, Norris came back into the car. But this time he was with another man. This man was dressed in a black suit. They both stood at the front of the car, side by side. The man in black was looking at Douglas, and Norris whispered something into his ear. Whatever was whispered then focused their attention on the black man. The man in the black suit cleared his throat, and spoke.

“Sid Willis?” He said. The black man responded by standing up in yet another threatening manner.

“How do you know my name? I never told you.” Sid – his name was – pointed directly at Norris.

“Sid, do you remember the store you were at today?” The black suited man asked. Confused, Sid nodded. The man continued. “Do you remember the gun shots?” Sid nodded

again, staying quiet. He seemed to be in a calm and relaxed manner now – a complete turn around from moments earlier. Douglas watched the situation from the back. His eyes widened. Shit. It's the police, Douglas thought. Or maybe the FBI?

The man in the black suit continued:

“Then you are aware of what happened. Do you have any questions regarding what happens now?”

Sid remained calm and quiet, and nodded one final time.

“The come with me.” The man in the suit guided Sid out of the car, and through the door

Norris looked back at Douglas. “Mr. Douglas Carter, right?” He said.

“Uh, yeah.” Douglas said, unsure of the situation.

Norris smiled. “You're next.”

With that, Norris left and shut the door. Douglas was alone in the car. He looked out the window, and it seemed to have gotten darker in the tunnel. Why are we still even in this tunnel? Douglas thought. They know. They know everything. It was a set up.

“I have to get out of here,” Douglas said quietly to himself. He picked up his travel bag and dashed to the back door of the car. He pushed and pulled on the door handle repeatedly, but it wouldn't budge. He turned around, not sure what to do. He dropped his bag, and kneeled down next to it. He unzipped it and

began to shuffle through his clothes. I need to get rid of the knife. I'll throw it out the window.

Douglas was pulling clothes out left and right, and finally reached the bottom of the bag. The knife was gone. Douglas' could feel pain in the pit of his stomach. His eyes widened, and he stared. He couldn't believe the knife was gone. He must have put it in the bag, the must have. Where else could it have gone? If the knife were anywhere else, there would be evidence pointing him. This couldn't be happening.

There was a heavy jolt of the train, and it began to slowly come to a stop. Nervous and afraid, Douglas stood up in the center isle of the train. He stood there and waited. The train finally came to a stop. The PA system within the car began to crackle, and a man's voice came over it. "Last stop. Last stop. Everyone must vacate the train. Thank you."

The PA system shut off, and the car door opened. Norris came in and stood by the door. "Last stop, Douglas. You ready to get off?" Norris didn't seem to pay any attention, or even care that Douglas was standing over his bag, with clothes strung everywhere. Douglas didn't answer. The man in the black suit then seemed to materialize from the other car, and into this one. He walked to the back and stood in front of Douglas.

"Mr. Douglas Carter?" He said.

“Yeah..”

“Do you remember the house you were in earlier tonight?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you remember your wife, Lilly Stallman?”

The fear and care of the situation then left Douglas’ body. He calmed down, and felt extremely relaxed. “Yes.”

“Is this your knife?”

Douglas looked at the black suited man’s left hand. In it, he gripped the bloody hunting knife used to kill his wife. “Yes, it’s mine.”

“There was a slight struggle when you attacked and killed Lilly Stallman,” the man said. “Do you remember falling back and hitting your head?”

“Yes. Everything went black.” Douglas said.

The man nodded, and then escorted Douglas out of the car using the side door, and into another deserted train station. It looked like the one in Hardwick, but this one was run down. The ticket office was boarded up, and there were burn marks all over the place. It reeked of rotting animal carcasses.

Douglas looked into the station and saw Sid walking aimlessly to a dark corner of the room, where he then vanished into the shadows.

The man in the black suit asked one more question. “Do you

have any questions as to why you're here?"

Douglas turned around and stared at the man with an emotionless face. "No. I understand."

The man in the suit, satisfied with Douglas' answer, climbed back into the train. Norris appeared at the doorway, and looked down at Douglas. Then the woman from the ticket office in Hardwick appeared over his shoulder. She shook her head, disappointed, and looked from Douglas to Norris. "I thought he was one of the good ones."

"It's hard to tell anymore." Norris said, as he pulled the train door shut. The engine started again, and the foghorn whistle sounded. The train started moving, and within seconds, was gone.

WITHIN THAT ROOM

The old house now sat dark and damp. The only light was that that shone in from the cracks in the boarded up windows. The wooden floor was chipped in many places, and what was left of the furniture was ripped and stained of the clamminess to the house. Broken glass lay on the floor under the closed off windows, and a few cockroaches scurried up and down the damaged walls. This was certainly not the house I remembered growing up.

When I was little, this house was a breeding ground of memories. I took my first steps here. I trotted in this front door after my first day of school. I had my graduation party here. My first serious girlfriend and I had - a few memories here. This house was my life. I lived here with my family for nearly 19 years. Then we had to leave. A change in my fathers' job was responsible for that. I am just shocked to see that after 10 years, the house is still here - having nobody, since us, live here.

Why'd I come back? Curiosity lured me back. Probably not in the fashion you're think about though. It had to do with extra bedroom upstairs - a small 7x7 bedroom, never once used by my sister or I, nor my parents. It was a room where we stuck old boxes that got in the way, or where we kept old furniture, waiting for a possible garage sale. We probably only opened the door to that room once a year, if that. But besides the storage, this room held a different purpose.

When I was close to six years of age, my late grandfather, sister and I were walking in the thicket behind the house. He was showing us nature. Birds' nests and groundhog burrows. We'd go down by the pond and lift up rocks to see the salamanders and worms. And that is when we found 'Chubs'.

My grandfather was lifting up a rock along the muddy banks of the pond. A strange animal, one in which I had never seen or heard of was coiled up underneath it. The animal, almost snake-like, must have been three feet in length, with dark green with black spots. The animal differed from a snake in many ways, or else I would have been convinced that's what it was. The creature, which my little sister dubbed, 'Chubs' at the time, was slimy in texture, and was six inches wide - it was very fat for a snake. The eyes sat very close together in the center of the face, unlike a snake, and I never once saw its tongue shoot out.

My grandfather thought it would be a good idea to bring Chubs back to the house to show my parents; he also thought there may be some kind of publicity involved, with perhaps discovering a new species of animal. However, when we got it back to the house, and before my parents got home to see Chubs, my grandfather claimed he had a vision. A vision in which we three were not supposed to find this creature. It was to be hidden from the world for another time. This didn't make sense to neither me nor my sister at the time, so we trusted the adult. My grandfather was never one to lie, or make things up to scare us.

He was dead serious about hiding the creature, fearing that it wasn't the right time. My sister always said that Chubs spoke to my grandfather. I never saw this happen, but how else would you explain his freaking out at the last minute, and proposing we hide it - none of it made sense to me.

My grandfather, almost immediately, carried the seemingly harmless Chubs, upstairs and into the spare room. He put the creature gently onto the floor, and watched it slither its way into the far corner of the room. He closed the door, and came to me, asking where my father kept the key to the room. I told him it was in an old coat pocket, which hung in the downstairs closet. He grabbed the key and locked the door. Stuffing the key into his jeans pocket, he took it with him later that night when my parents got home. He told my sister and I to never mention Chubs to my parents, or open that door until the time was right; it was our little secret.

I never once mentioned it to my parents. I wouldn't betray my grandfather like that. Although there were plenty of times, that I feared what was in that room, and wanted to tell someone. But the only person I could talk to was my sister. She felt the same way I did about it. Years go by, and you don't see what's behind the door, and in that room. But you know it's in there, and that's the scariest part - knowing what Chubs looked like as the seasons changes, or how big he'd gotten. My sister and I wondered if Chubs would remember us, or if he was angry.

There were times when I would come out of the bathroom after taking a shower and pass by the spare room. I would put my ear to the door, and hear sounds. Sounds that resembled dragging, or shuffling on the floor. I knew Chubs was in there, moving about. I also knew that there was a air vent on the wall in that room, and to this day, I could swear that there were times, late at night, when the silent dark overtook the world, that Chubs would creep through the walls and watch me sleep from the vent in my room. It was these thoughts that kept my curiosity and fear on edge until we moved.

Now ten years after we moved, I am back at this house. My curiosity had taken the better part of my life, and I had to know. Was Chubs still there? Had he grown? If so, what did he look like now? Did he slip out of the house somehow at one point, and is now back down in the pond? Was he dead?

I walked up the stairs, which seemed to creak on every step. Down the hall, and to the right - the spare room sat. Door still closed. I walked up to it slowly, memories resurrecting in my mind. The whole history behind Chubs had rendered me confused. I didn't know what the reason was for my grandfather to hide him in that room, or when the right time was for Chubs to come out.

I stood at the door, by face two feet away from it. I gently put my hand on the door, and moved in, turning my ear to it. I listened, being as quiet as I could, waiting for a sign that Chubs

was still in there. I couldn't hear anything. I closed my eyes, and held my breath. I hoped. From what sounded like the furthest possible point in that room, a slight sliding sound started. It sounded like a very large object dragging on a very rough surface. It was Chubs. He was still in there.

My mind began to shuffle through images of what terrible thing could be in the room, right behind the door my ear was placed against. It was time to find out. I reached into my pocket and pulled out the screwdriver I brought, to take off the doorknob. I fixed the screwdriver in place, and before I began to twist out the screws, I thought to myself: What if this is not that time for Chubs to come out of hiding? Maybe it was just a way for me to get closure on the whole thing, and not the right time for this room to be opened. I stopped where I was, and contemplated these thoughts. Finally, I decided to pull away from the door. It just wasn't time yet. And there was no way I was going to go against my grandfather - this was our secret. It was part of our bond. Maybe Chubs would be revealed sooner or later, but now wasn't his time. I was happy with my decision, and knew my grandfather would be proud. Some things are just better kept hidden.