

Who's There?

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A Misty Sunday Morning
Alison Little

Up early, out early, with the dog on his leash at eight o'clock on a Sunday morning. Raincoat on, sauntering through the thick mist on this post-Halloween, or as the locals call it: Mischief Night, morning. This is my most trusted outdoor jacket, gets me through endless dog walks, early start open-air craft fairs and days when I just feel like hiding away and becoming invisible. Belonging to my partner, but inherited by myself; a trusty navy outer waterproof, an aluminium lining for warmth, finished off with a thick white plastic zip and toggles. Dave was actually given it on one of the ships he had been working on; it's safe, practical and can be relied on. Passing a young girl, about eighteen or nineteen, just having got out of a taxi, wearing last night's attire and make-up un-cleansed discussing 'What actually happened' with one of her friends on her mobile phone. Remembering back to when my Saturday nights used to consist of getting dressed up, meeting up with the girls, going to the bars, followed by whatever came our way. Sunday mornings spent trying the decipher what had happened, muffled phone calls consisting of 'I don't remember that' and 'What was his name again'. Well, hopefully, the training day will be good later, oh when did I start to age and get so level headed?

Then into Everton park, visions of not more than ten meters in front, incurred by the mist, hiding the views which reach across the Mersey, over to the Wirral and on a good day the mountain ranges of North Wales. Little dog off his lead to explore; freely and at his own will, sniffing, smelling and the frequent cocking of the leg. I see some discarded firework shells, time of year when things start hotting up and rockets get fired around. Turning the corner I see a black Staff running towards myself, thinking about Charlie I look over to see how far back he is and if I should put him back on his lead. Staffs can be dangerous and vicious towards other dogs, Charlie, although doing his best against larger dogs; ultimately amounting to a fur-lined toy-dog. It's okay, though, the other pet owner shouts his dog as he walks down another path. The Staff follows his owner's commands obediently, no desire to start a fight, I wish Charlie as well behaved. I keep my eye on him in case he decides to go after them, run over then start the strife.

A discarded goal mask lies to the side of the footpath, an Edvard Munch 'The Scream' style guise, the twenty-first-century plastic version, mouth held fully open and eyes virtually decapitated. Used for an evening of Trickle-Treating, money gathering and sweet sucking, then tossed to one side: mission completed. Although the mist is deep it is not actually raining, the skin on my face is only damp from the moisture in the air, the molecules of water within the low lying clouds hitting onto my exposed skin and awakening my senses on this early Sunday morning. However, it sounds like it's raining, raining heavily into the crisp autumnal leaves, the shell shaker rattle and the fresh aroma of water falling onto the urban green space. When I walk under a set of trees I feel the rain coming down on myself, onto my hair and over my shoulders. I walk on, then going under a conifer I realise that the rain only seems to be coming down under the trees. Supernatural, the wrong way around and in conflict to rational, not falling in the exposed areas, then tipping down in the covered environment. A few strides further forward, over a few short moments which

felt much longer, I realise what had happened; it had been raining heavily earlier in the morning during day break. The rain had been collected by the foliage and was now falling from the leaves on the trees. What was ghostly on the first appearance was actually just nature's delay: a wonder to admire not something to revere; not supernatural, but at on with nature.

As we go over the brow the fog has started to disperse. I hear a Man singing at the top of his voice, the sound was coming from the bottom off the hill by the Netherfield Road side of the park.

So wake me up when it's all over

Netherfield Road has a history of being frequented by sex workers and kerb crawlers and still to this day it is common the see girls positioned against lamp posts looking for trade. More usual in the afternoon or early evening, not at this time forenoon. I wondered if I should avert walking in that direction, my eyes scanning for a fluffy form to see where my dog had gone. I had been propositioned by a man down there at around seven on a Wednesday morning only a few months ago. While circuiting the park, dressed in my usual dog walking attire of my acclaimed aluminium lined rain coat I was approached by a local man. Dressed neutrally in a pair of jeans, frayed and bedraggled, grey sweat jacket, in his twenties but spotty like a hormonal teenager, topping his look off with a greasy grey-blond grown out crew-cut.

'Are you looking for business?'

At first not understanding, then realising that he was looking for a prostitute, despite the fact that any sane person could not have thought I worked in that line, he, in fact, did so. I told him;

'No!'

Him being wasted after a night spent drinking, with more cans of Stella to follow visible through the plastic carrier bag he was clasping. He kept on at myself, his bottom lip held forefront of the higher not fitting together in normal poise, ready to omit gas, trying to suggest I should be entering the depravity of his existence. On that, I struck him, not particularly hard, but it was my intention to hurt him, my right hook not having lost its strength from the few years I had used it last. In this, with him being drunk he stumbled on the steps and nearly fell over forwards, his bottom lip reaching out at the forefront of the motion vibrating like a tuning fork that had just been struck. He started screaming at full pitch, telling me that I was 'Mad', in this I responded by kicking him a few times, nothing extreme, just 'Trainers on ass', then I retorted:

'Your right, I am Mad and if I see you hanging around here again I will do more than just kick you'

In this, he made his way off along Netherfield Road muttering more slander towards myself but not at a comprehensible volume.

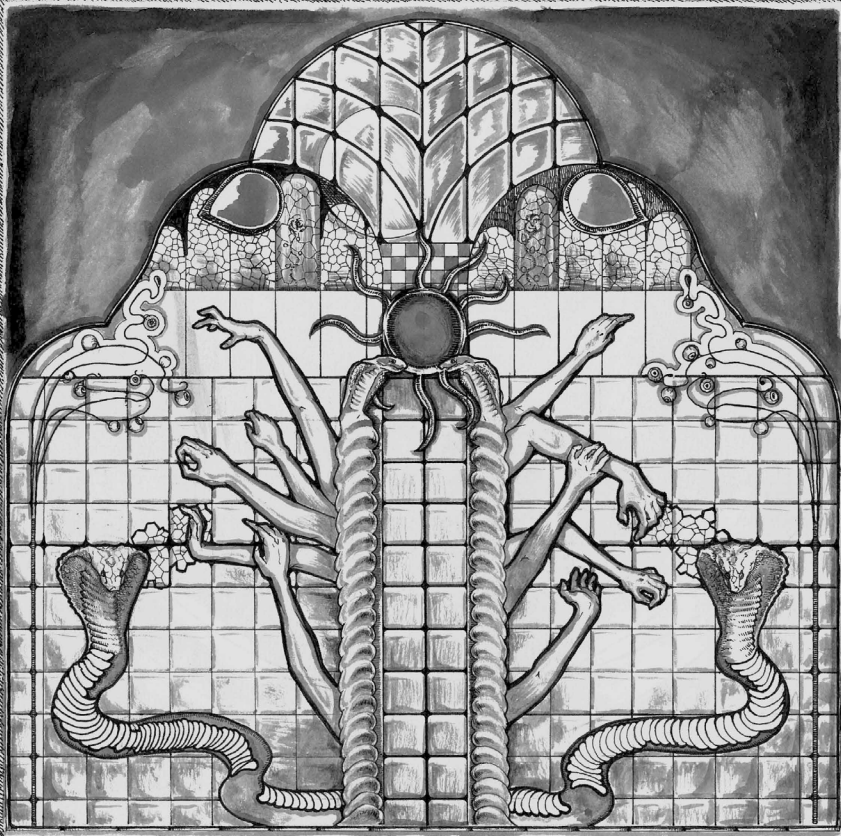
So wake me up when it's all over

In debate over as to whether I should gravitate in the direction of the lower part of the hill, I see the man singing start doing press-ups, his upper body located on the lower position of the steps to increase the resistance of the movement. He then moves on to squat thrust accompanied by more singing along to Avicii: 'Wake me up'. Wait a minute, he was not drunk or high on substances, he was there to work out not because he is intoxicated. He's probably wearing earphones and been singing out loud by mistake; carried away with the athletic motion, not realising his vocals were being shared by the locals.

Feeling my way through the darkness

The dog and I ramble down towards the bottom of the hill, undeterred, there was nothing to be apprehensive about. This section of the Park often used for training, often racing up the centre with running club myself. We were always doing training sets up this distinct rise in the terrain, sent two at a time and simply doing your best to keep your head up and run until you reach the brow. Actually used for Highland Game training, often seeing the hillside laid out with specialist rope and weight assortments coinciding with carefully located cones. Although the sport is unusual in Liverpool, the steep hill is ideal for throwing the hammer games so many travels from further afield for training. As we pass the man I can see that he has earphones in and is in exercise gear. Just forgot and hasn't realised he was singing aloud by mistake, best not to say anything, I don't want to embarrass him. Then he catches my eye and realises that he had his accompanying vocals had been at full blast, I look away but I can't help laughing to myself, smiling I walk on, the park being a pleasure on this misty Sunday morning.



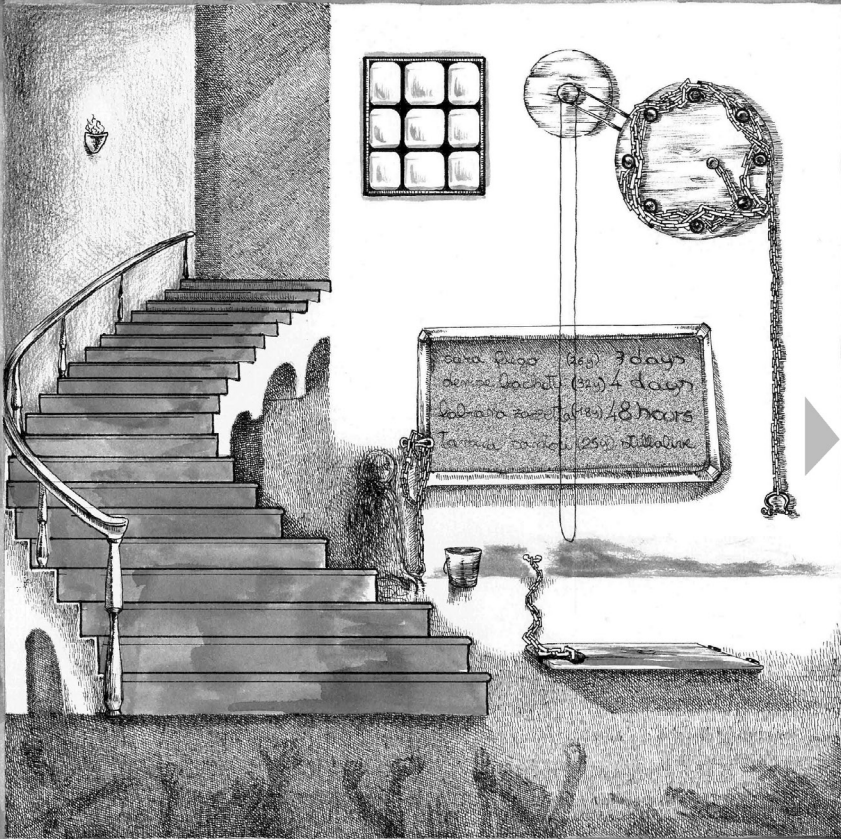


Hi! Are you a fun-loving, not -too-nosy type? Then, this is the house for you!

In this recently restored, isolated, fully furnished mansion you would be living with the landlord (me) and everything would be working perfectly, from kitchen appliances to electric cages. As you can see in the pictures the place is cozy, the location is on the countryside, a bit far from any other house or living soul, and there's no bus service, so you'd have to drive here.

All expenses included
255 square meters
Pets OK
Non-smokers only

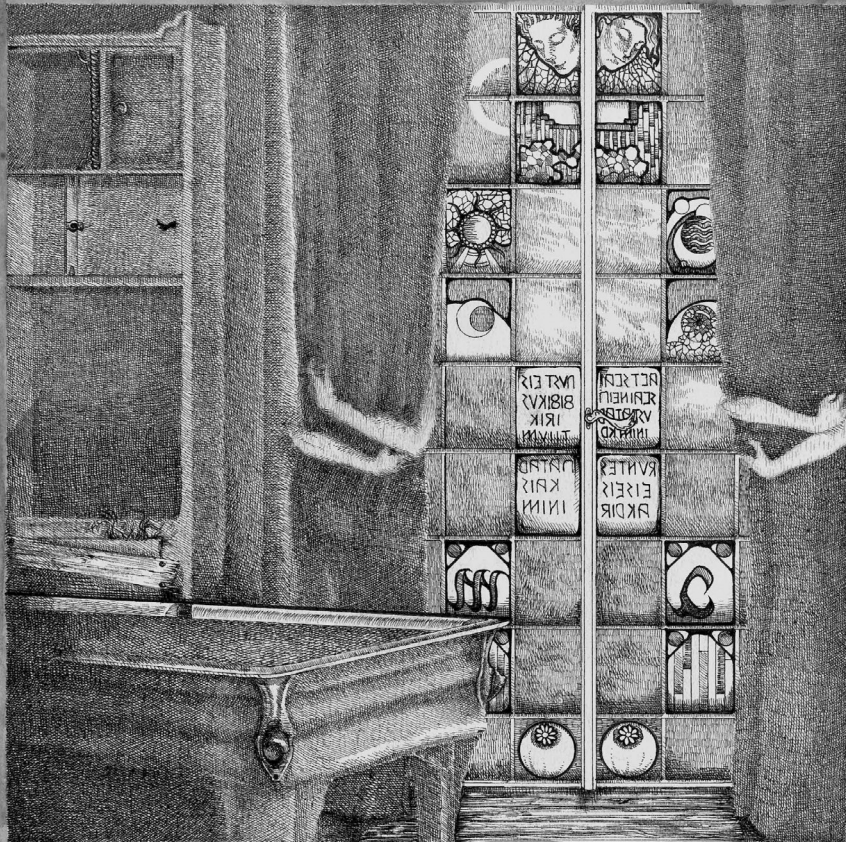




I am very easy to live with, it's like I'm never there since I work mainly during night hours. I'm looking for a tenant who is willing to lend a hand every now and then with some errands like moving large trash bags or testify my presence at home to the police when needed (it happens seldom).

Other than that, you'd be enjoying a stunning house at the price of a cheap student dorm, with access to all 19 rooms except for the master bedroom at second floor.





When I'm away for work trips I might also ask you to bring a bucket full of raw meat at the end of the stairs in the basement WITHOUT DESCENDING THE LAST STEP.

The mansion has WIFI access at all floors, we have washing machine and drier. The building is surrounded by a beautiful garden.

Feel free to contact me for further details.



m.



Daughter of Darkness
by Daniel Willcocks

There aren't a lot of little girls that like the dark. I'm not just talking night time dark; I mean pitch dark. Abysmal dark. A thousand feet below the earth under pounds of compact soil dark. Poke your eyes out and dunk your head in ink dark.

But Zoe was unlike other little girls.

Zoe lived in the dark. Thrived in the dark. Made the darkness her friend. Sure, she was a regular little girl on the surface to look at - if many people ever had the chance to look at Zoe. Think: button nose, pigtails, twirly dress, and you start to get the picture. But, unlike most girls her age, Zoe never saw sunlight.

It was a precautionary thing really. Father had explained it to her long ago. So long ago now that it really didn't matter. She couldn't remember the words, and the reason seemed to have been dented on her heart, but never inked. What did it matter anyway? Life is as it always was. Each day turning over like a greasy chicken over a rotisserie.

But on this particular day, Zoe's life changed.

It was bin day. Her favourite day (well, besides rainy days). Mostly because in her gloomy den she couldn't hear much of the surface world. She knew of birds, but only from the stories her mother told her. She knew of cars and planes and bugs. But if there was one thing that she longed for, staring into the endless blackness printed on the earthy walls, it was music. Glorious, tinkling, velvety music. And with bin day, that music came.

It came in short bursts. The sound just loud enough to penetrate through the concrete roof. A kind of beep, beep, beep. Oh! A sound unlike her own breathing, which, besides the ghosts and imaginaries that lived as shadows, kept her company most days. Beep, beep. Oh how it gave her the chills.

With a nod of her head the stool moved move one corner over to where the sound appeared to be loudest. She stood on the chair on tiptoes and stretched, thirsty for more, guzzling the sound. Counting each beep as it came, knowing that once the beeps subsided, would come her next gift from the gods.

And sure enough, there it was. The raised voices of Mother and Father.

Did Zoe know that she was human? Perhaps. It's hard to know what you are really when you make a pit your home. But there was something in the voices of her parents that reminded her of what she was, knowing that there were more of her kind outside. On some days she would simply spend hours in silence, and it was these days that would bring with them a depression. The idea that everything that existed as hazes of her memory were nothing more than visions and dreams. That perhaps she truly was alone. Stuck in a kind of purgatory. Trapped in Zoe's den forever. Mother and Father's voices reminded her of who she was.

They were sharp that night, overlapping each other, cutting each other off mid-sentence. Zoe could catch snippets of conversation. Things like "Well you never fucking remember!" or "How many times do I have to fucking tell you?!" And she'd smile up at the surface, knowing that they were calling for her. Somewhere deep down she knew they spoke loudly so that she could hear them still, to remind her that they were still there for her. They hadn't left.

Her heart felt fuzzy and warm. And when she heard the slamming

of some hard object, followed by the sound of heavy footsteps, her heart fluttered.

She grinned. Hadn't it only been a few days since Mother's last visit? Since Mother had unplugged the hole and whispered her words of love from them both? Promises of kisses and cuddles once the surface world had become kinder and once they'd worked out how to cure it – how to fix the magic that Zoe couldn't control.

And there she was! The grinding sound of the plug spinning in its hole, the breathlessness of her mother, and, if she wasn't mistaken...

Yes!

Father too! Oh, when would her luck run out?!

"Don't you walk away from me, bitch."

His words soothed her like warm honey. She couldn't help herself, "Father?"

All movement stopped, and Zoe wondered whether she had imagined it all. How silly to think of seeing both of them on the same day... On bin day! Stupid, stupid, Zoe.

Then there came an almighty slap and she heard her mother weep. That was when Zoe knew that something was wrong. Her mother never wept anymore. Hadn't wept in front of her since the day Father had placed her in the endless shadows for her own good.

The little girl snapped her neck backwards, concentrated hard on the hole and thought happy thoughts, elated at being so close to both Mother and Father. Thought of that blissful sound of rain as the droplets tapped on the earth above her. Soothing patterns, rhythmic and gentle. Thought of the flash of a smile she sometimes caught from her mother through the hole on particularly moonlit nights. Thought of seeing Father. Having Father here with her to cuddle, to dream with, to play. She knew Father would make a good companion. She bet he made the best imaginary teas.

The visions were so real that she could almost feel it. And she was concentrating so hard that she couldn't hear the gasps of her mother as the lid of her den flew into the air, landing somewhere in the neighbour's yard. Her eyes shut so tight that she couldn't see her father's face puffing in the moonlight as he grabbed at his own neck until he was red in the face. As he hovered into the air, guided by invisible forces. As his neck ripped open and his life juice stained his night shirt, growing darker by the minute, exploding like a wire noose tightened around a grape.

Zoe's father died in seconds. Killed by a little girl, with little talents.

And all Zoe could feel was the gentle pitter patter of rain.



COME ON
IT'S THIS
WAY!

SLOW DOWN
GUYS! I CAN'T
KEEP UP!

NOBODY
WANTED YOU
TO COME,
LISA!



I'M TELLING
MOM!

shhhhhh



They were
spotted just
over there

I don't see
anything.



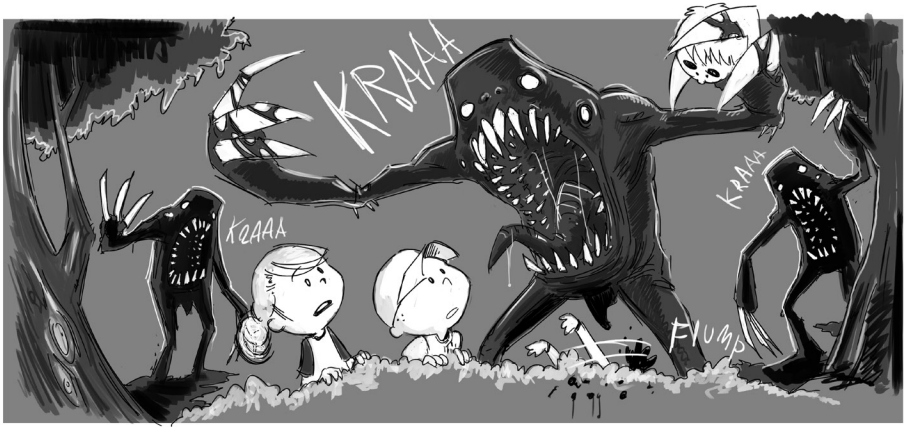
OK first thing we
need to do is establish
a perimeter. We want
to know what we are
getting into.

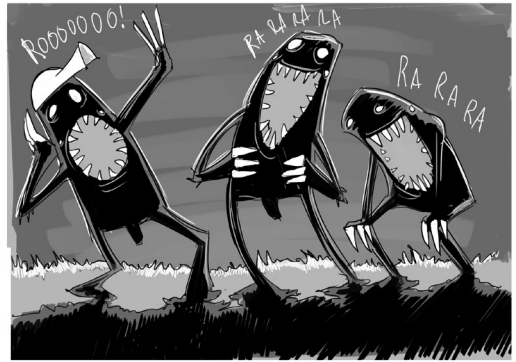


Then we need to go...

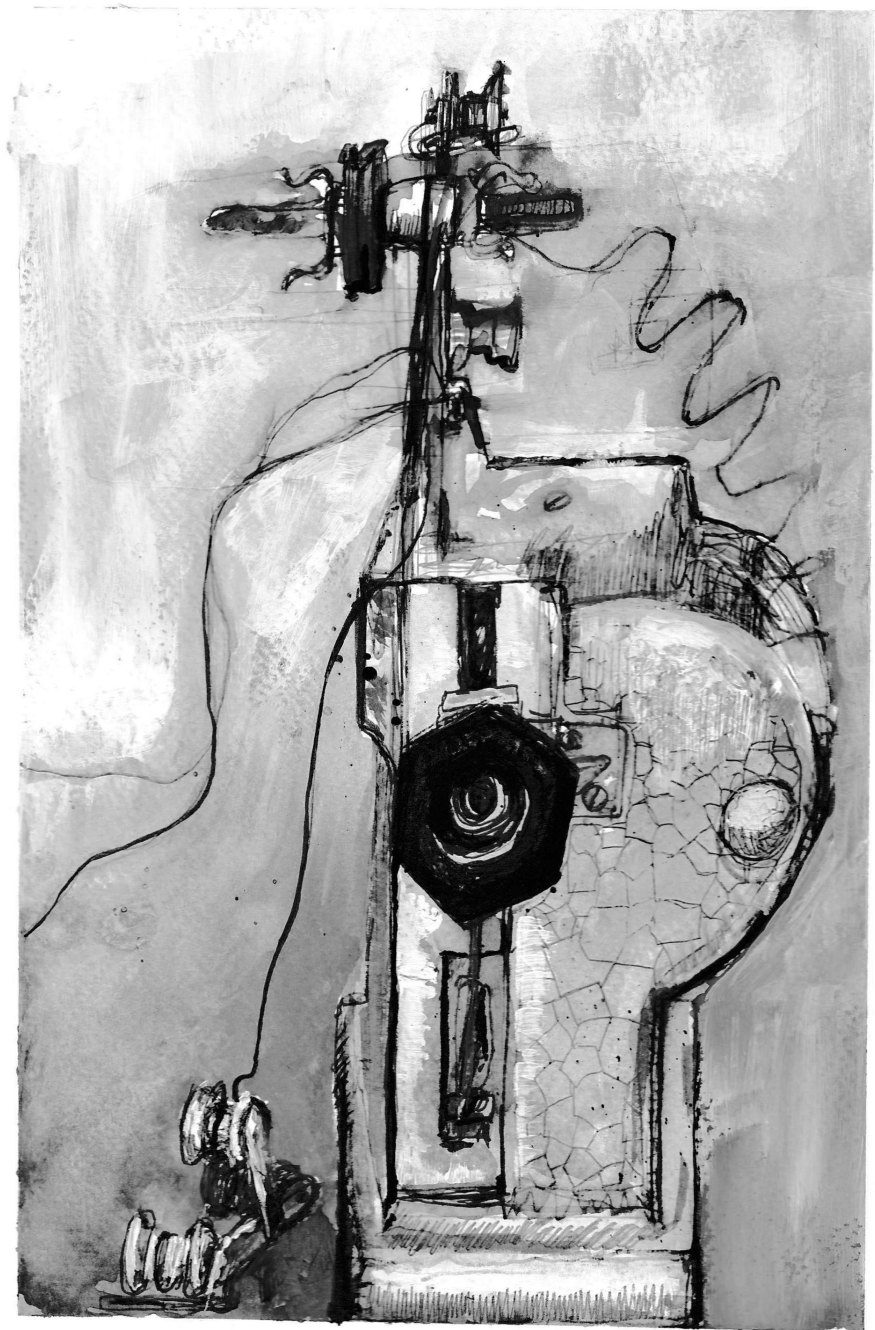


Go where
Ryan?











The Fairies' Revenge
an excerpt
LADY WILDE

THE FAIRIES have a great objection to the fairy raths, where they meet at night, being built upon by mortal man.

THE NEIGHBOURS WARNED HIM that it was a fairy rath; but he laughed and never minded (for he was from the north) and looked on such things as old wives' tales.

But the fairies were all the time plotting how they could punish the farmer for taking away their dancing ground,

"Go away," said the mistress of the house, "you shall have no milk from me. I'll have no tramps coming about my place."

Some time after, the best and finest of the cows sickened and gave no milk, and lost her horns and teeth and finally died

But soon after this he began to grow queer and strange, and was disturbed in his sleep; for he said the fairies came round him at night and pinched and beat him, and some sat on his chest and he could neither breathe nor move.

“MOTHER! MOTHER! Send for the priest to take away
the fairies, for they are killing me; they are here on my
chest, crushing me to death”,

JUST AS THE CLOCK STRUCK MIDNIGHT
he awoke and sat up, and when his mother put her arms around him
weeping, he whispered to her **“The angels are here, mother”**

and then he sank back and so died.

The farmer ceased to mind his farm,
the crops went to ruin

the cattle died

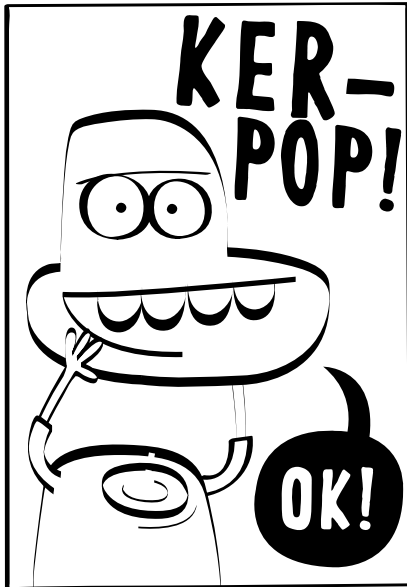
Before a year and a day were over he was laid in the grave by the side of his little son.

the house it was pulled down

so the grass grew all over it again and the fairies
danced over it once more in the moonlight as they
used to in the old time.

COSMIC CLIFF SPOOKY SPECIAL!

A COMIC BY MARC JACKSON





Deru
Stoyev

Aqua Blues
Kevin T Rogers

Horace Smedley loved his wife Gladys and their daughter Rosie - and they both loved Halloween. It was their favourite time of year and they adored every last bit of the spooky fun. Horace though had always thought it childish nonsense. Or as he put it, 'Bloody mumbo-jumbo for kids!' But that was before he was married. These days he enjoyed it for his family's sake. Even if he did still believe that anything to do with the so-called 'supernatural' was claptrap. Nonetheless - here it was again, and Horace meant to do Gladys and Rosie proud.

*

The Smedleys lived in a small seaside resort, and every year the local Headless Huntsman Hotel would host a 'Fang-tastic Halloween Fortnight!' It was a family-friendly affair, and Horace always took his wife and daughter on the evening of the 31st. The staff would dress as famous monsters, and all kinds of eerie entertainments could be found both inside and out on the sweeping hotel lawns. Amongst other grisly delights already sampled this year was a traditional Ghost Train, the Devil's Hot-Chestnut Stand, and a Horrible Haunted Maze!

And now as a thin dusk congealed to darkness and a copper moon turned bloody, Horace threaded his wife and daughter towards a small striped tent on the outer perimeter of the grounds. It was pitched here every year, but the Smedleys had never visited before, as father and mother had thought Rosie perhaps a tad too young. But now she was nine, they'd decided she was probably old enough to enjoy it. The trio halted and all three read the sign:

MADAME WRYNECK, MYSTERIOUS MISTRESS OF FATE! IS
THERE LIGHT AT THE END OF YOUR TUNNEL? CONSULT
THE ORACLE! (only £7.50. per reading)

Horace of course thought this was all tosh - but also knew that Gladys read her daily horoscopes religiously and liked to believe in such things. And Rosie would be enchanted. So they got in line to take their turn, which gradually arrived. And since children needed to be accompanied by an adult, the giggling infant entered with her equally excited mother. Horace waited outside, smoking his last cigarette. Until his spouse and offspring emerged wide-eyed and beaming. Rosie began to babble:

'She said I'll be a great help to Mum when "The chips are down." She said that, didn't she, Mum!'

'Yes, she did, sweetheart,' her mum laughed. 'And,' Gladys marvelled, 'she told me that I must "expect the unexpected!" Maybe I'll win the Lotto!'

Horace cheerfully feigned amazement, but inwardly sniggered at such general 'predictions', rendered in such clichéd terms. Madame Wryneck obviously wasn't very creative when it came to her script! But he didn't actually say that. Instead, at his wife and daughter's insistence, he entered the tent for his own reading.

*

The interior was dimly lit with candles. Madame Wryneck sat behind her table, with her loop earrings, Gypsy skirt, blouse and tunic, and a crystal ball in front of her. 'Well, at least she looks the part,' her client thought, 'I'll give her that!' The fortune-teller fixed him with an enigm-

matic gaze – and maybe noticed the faint smirk at the corners of his mouth.

'Sit,' she said, waving one bony hand at the chair opposite, while holding out the other for payment. Horace took the hint, sat down and paid the fee. She counted it into a leather purse hung from the girdle at her waist. Then narrowed her eyes.

'Consider carefully: Are you sure you want to know your future? Some people think they do, but . . . If you decide not, then please to leave now!'

Horace rolled his eyes at her awful Bela Lugosi accent – but nodded his ascent.

'Very well,' the oracle began, 'be it on your own head!'

'Here we go with the clichés again!' he mused, and almost laughed out loud. But now she gazed so meaningfully at the crystal that it seemed as if she might actually be about to share some amazing revelations! Then spoiled it all by coming out with the most hackneyed pronouncements you could imagine: Horace must always, 'look before he leaped,' but never 'a borrower nor a lender be;' he should 'count his blessings' and never ever 'look a gift-horse in the mouth.' The recipient of her insights couldn't help snorting, and was getting ready to leave, when . . . The old seer suddenly sat bolt upright, her eyes rolled back in her head, and her voice became a guttural rasp!

'You must beware of water – there is danger in the water! I see DEATH in the water!' Horace thought this was taking the act a little too far, and was about to say so, but then she fell back in her chair, breathing heavily, her eyes streaming. 'Go, go now,' she moaned, 'but remember – there is mortal danger in the water!' Horace thought about asking for his money back, but there was something about her expression that dissuaded him – a look of horror. So he thanked her for her time instead – and left.

*

He didn't tell his wife and daughter what had been said – why should he worry them with the words of an old charlatan? And besides, if he were being honest with himself, he didn't really want to dwell on it. So he made up a prediction about living happily ever after. And then, having exhausted the Hotel's entertainments, walked Gladys and Rosie the short distance home where they could all continue with some more Halloween frivolities. Until he remembered his empty cigarette packet. So he left briefly to call in at the local corner shop.

And to try to forget the Gypsy's warning. Because the way she'd acted – the way she'd looked at him – had left him jittery. Naturally, he knew it was all hocus-pocus – but the sound of the nearby ocean wasn't helping. 'Danger in the water,' she'd said, 'death!' Was it possible that she had actually foreseen something? And then he heard the screams!

A young girl by the sound of it – and one that seemed in terrible trouble! There was no one else around – and the screaming continued. Horace hesitated, then thought of his own daughter – and hurried towards the commotion. It was a street away, on a lonely, poorly lit part of the sea front. And what he saw horrified him! An autumn mist was drifting in off the ocean, but he could just about make out a young girl cowering by a bus stop. And she was screaming at – what? Some kind of reptilian creature! It reminded him of an old horror film in which a two-legged saurian had emerged from the depths of an inky lagoon. Horace stared at the abomination and then at the sea:
'Death in the water!'

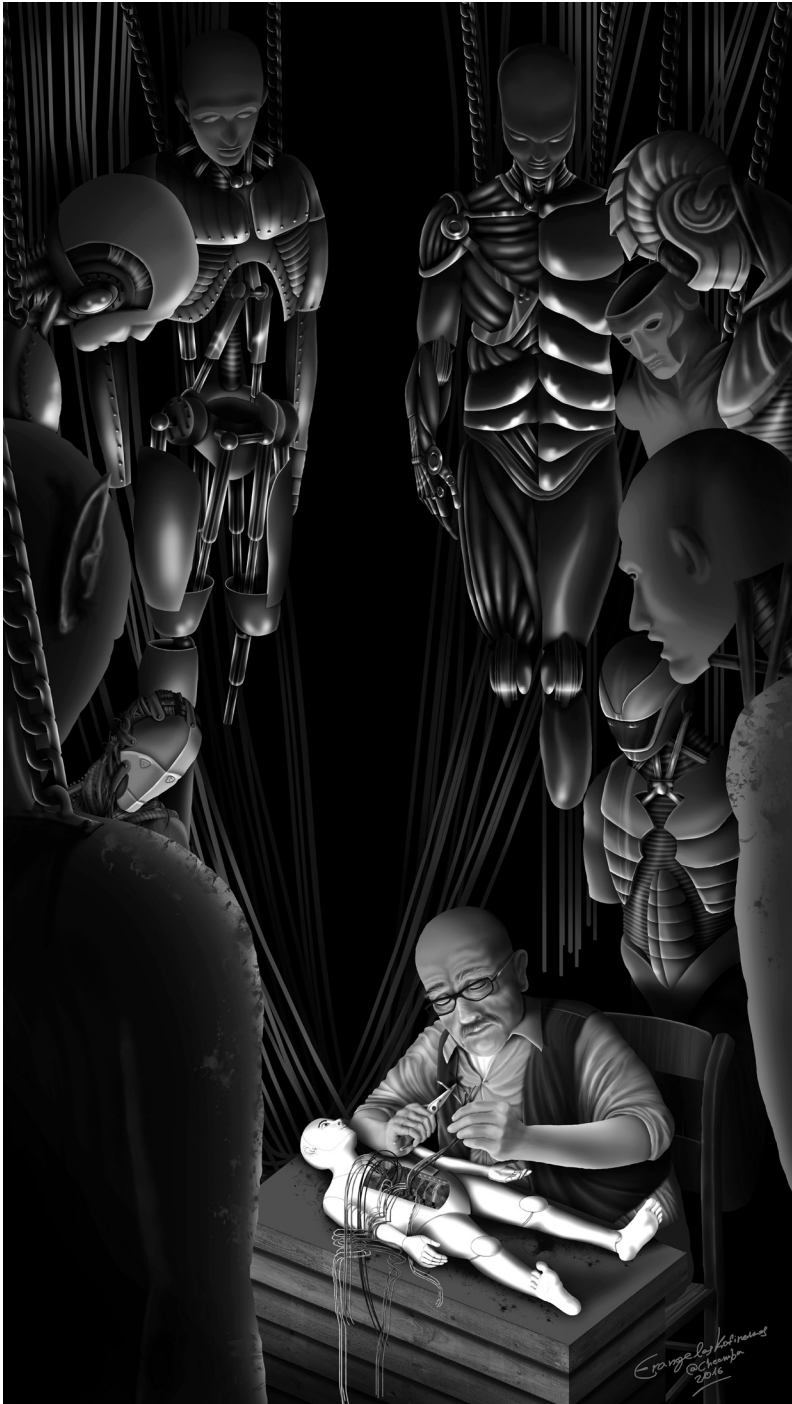
He increased his speed, waved his fists and bellowed terrible threats, hoping to scare the thing off. It turned, the girl stopped screeching. And as Horace neared - two more monsters emerged from the bus shelter: A vampire Count and a man-made creation with bolts through its neck. Horace stopped in his tracks, and the group - including the 'victim' - ran off, shrieking with laughter. Youngsters - of course - simple Halloween hijinx! They called back a couple of impolite names, then disappeared into the thickening fog. He couldn't believe his own stupidity - that he'd let the old Gypsy's 'prophecy' get to him! But finally he smiled and turned back for his cigarettes - and then home for some further Halloween games with Gladys and Rosie. 'Death in the water,' he chuckled, 'yeah, right!'

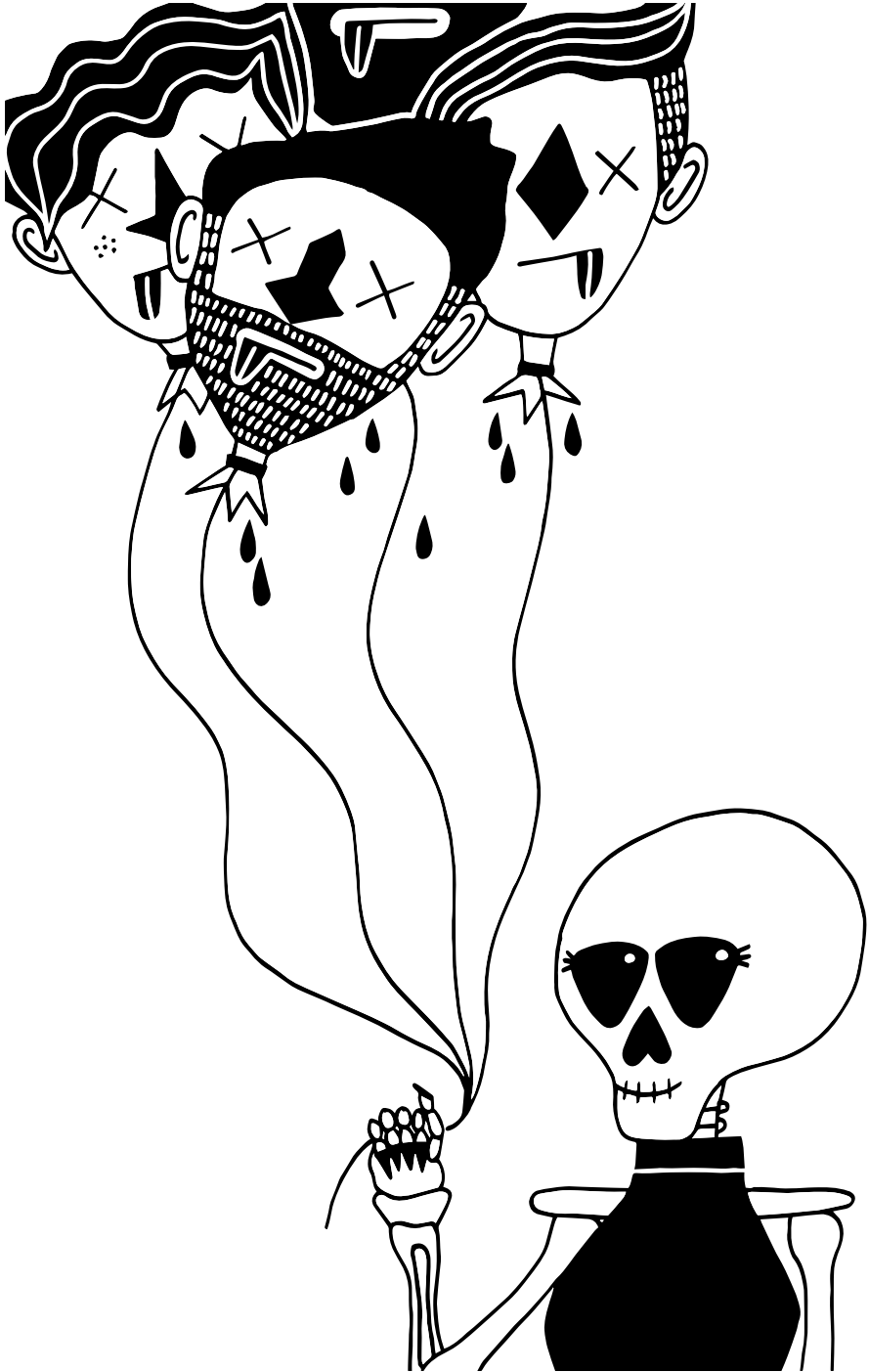
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Horace was buried the following week. It was a bleak day overhung by threatening clouds. And as mourning family and neighbours walked from the grave, Mrs. Jones wiped a tear and turned to old Mr. Sharkey. 'So sad,' she said, 'and shocking - I heard he turned blue!'

'Yes,' the aged codger agreed, with perhaps the ghost a smile on his lips, 'to choke on a Granny Smith while you're bobbing for apples! I mean, who would have thought it could be that dangerous?' Then both put up their umbrellas because the rain had begun to pour. And in the near-distance a turbulent ocean roared, and Madame Wryneck packed up her tent to disappear as mysteriously as she had arrived. The way she always did. Until next Halloween . . .









Hello and welcome to The Ghoul Guide's with Pippa!

Today we are looking at the fantastic *"My Very First Horror Alphabet Book"* from Nik Holmes at *Zombie Dollars Creations*

It's a fiend filled book to help you learn your A B Cs with 'colourful nightmarish images that will capture your child's sense of horror'.

With the book and company described as:

"ZombieDollar Creative dig up the rotting carcass of popular culture, stitches it together in the lab and slaps the resulting abomination into illustrations! You know, for kids."

When I first laid eyes on this book, I was incredibly excited, and I'm the middle of Birmingham's MCM comicon, November 2015... Dressed in a giant, Link from Zelda onesie I'll add.

I was lucky enough to meet the creator Nik (who was a student of Manchester Metropolitan University, like myself) and look at some of his spectacular prints that day, which Leif went on to buy, along with her own copy of this book.

This was also released on Kickstarter at a later date in 2016, which was unfortunately unsuccessful, for reasons I can't even fathom. At a later date there was a much more successful Kickstarter,

and I am hoping that they may try again for a larger release, related to the full card children's book. Because this is something I would love to get behind and see reach a much larger audience. This adorable little book deserves a place on the shelves of all warped little boys and girls.

It covers 26 different horror based characters from ghoulish favourites such as Chucky From Child's Play to the Xenomorph from Alien. All in stunning vibrantly coloured cartoons of each horrific character in childlike form.

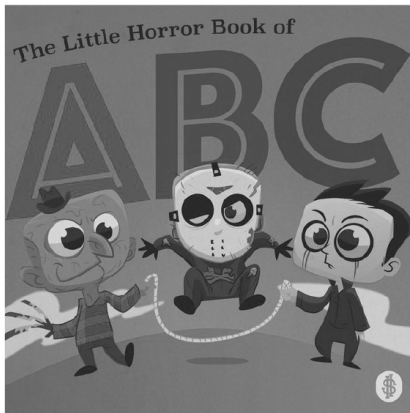
Following the Dr Seuss style rhymes though this book, is cute, funny and informative, giving you a little backstory on each of the various characters, and the films in which they appeared.

I personally really enjoy comics, graphic novels and art books. This begins to combine all three, which is a really fantastic idea. I love how such a simplistic form of alphabetic choices and vibrant colours can really drag you in.

Having looked at this one particular piece, it is worth taking a look at other creations from Nik Holmes such as his fabulous Walking Dead prints that you can pick up on his store www.zombiedollars.com.

My favourite of his print designed is his range of wanted posters, featuring

beautifully rendered mugshots of our favourite fictional psychopaths. From Freddy Krueger, to Jason Voorhees, and several other not so friendly fiends. I found it really fun to see the characters in a position that almost breaks the fourth wall through design. Bringing these fantastic characters to life through almost a form of situational comedy. Which to me is a fascinating concept, and it works incredibly well. With the entire design cleverly leading back into the story behind each character in a such a succinct way, it feels like these posters could almost be real.



Over the last couple of days I have been in contact with Nik himself to discuss what it is that drove him to begin this project and where he wants to take it. I was very lucky to be shown some of the brilliant previous designs for the characters, and see how much they have changed before the finished product in the books. Which to me look amazing, but Nik still is striving for improvement, which is always the sign of a brilliant artist.

The book idea was initially formulated a few years ago for the 'Strangekidsclub' website, as something that could be added to on a weekly basis, with the alphabet being an ideal source of inspiration. Unfortunately work

commitments left this project incomplete. After becoming a shelved idea, whilst partially completed Nik came up with the idea to convert this into a book, as I previously mentioned this is when the art style went through several dramatic changes.

The version of the book that I have is the paperback version, but it has recently been printed as a hardback, which I need to get a copy of myself, and I fully intend on picking one up at the Birmingham MCM November 19th-20th at the NEC, where Nik will be with his own stall, so you should check that out!

In conclusion I think this is a fantastic little book, the art is brilliant, and the concept is endearing and creepy... Now what more could you want! You can pop over and grab a copy from his [ZombieDollar](#) site, or meet him at the MCM in November!

I am still in the hope that a full card version will make it to a new Kickstarter, and we can see this gorgeous little book in the homes of creepy families, with their little monsters learning the importance of G is for Ghost face, and my favourite X is for Xenomorph.

Keep it creepy now!

Pippa







