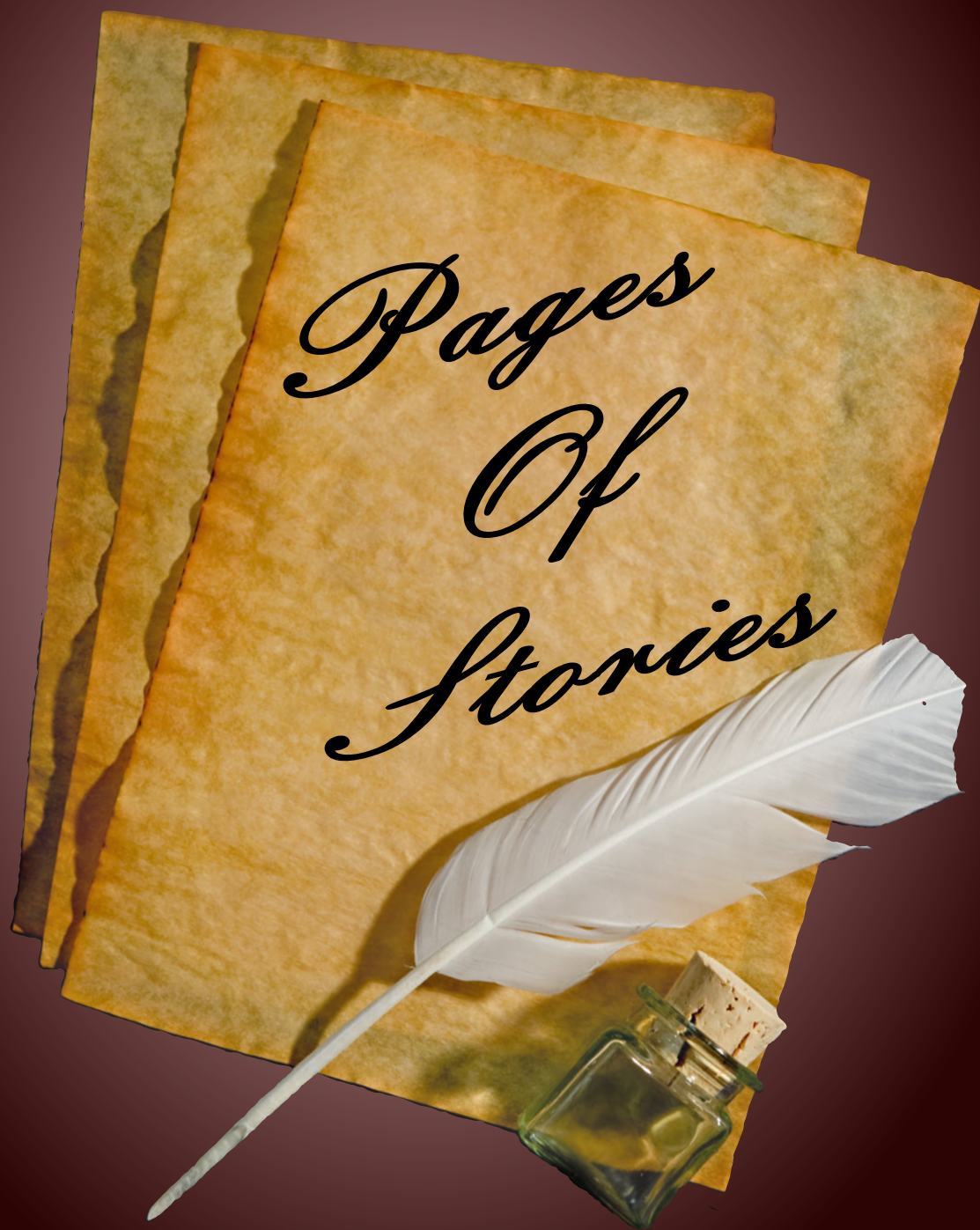


*Issue # 4*

*Winter 2011*



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# Publisher's Say

Happy New Year! It's hard to believe that 2011 is already here. If your 2010 was anything like mine, then you were all very busy.

It was only a year ago that we first put out a call for short stories. We had no website, barely a logo and had only just incorporated. It amazes me to this day that authors were willing to send their stories to a complete stranger who was only in the process of setting up shop.

We've come a long way since then. This is our 4th publication, each one being completely different from the last. The magazine is available in a variety of different electronic formats and we've added to the content of the magazine with the 'Getting to Know...' section. We also launched 'Bits Of Pages' on the website to allow readers to peruse the magazine before buying. We have the RSS Feed and a blog to keep the lines of communication going. Our Facebook page is as active as ever.

There is so much more to come. We'll be working with Lorraine Wylie as her experience not only as an author but in PR will be invaluable. Jackie Jaquish is now helping out the magazine, concentrating on sales and subscriptions.

Starting next month I'll be putting on workshops for authors close to home. My goal is to provide an author with information from the perspective of a publisher. I want to make the story selection very difficult for myself. If I can tell an author what I look for in a story, then it makes it easier for the author to write that story. This is an exciting venture for me as I get to meet some of the authors face to face and I can get some feedback as well. This

kind of interaction should make for a better magazine, better stories, and a better website.

We'll have a special "War" issue coming out in the fall. While we hope to be able to print off a few copies, it will be available electronically. The definition of war is pretty broad and the stories will be coming from all over the world. The stories will be non-fiction and if you are interested just send us an email and we'd be happy to give you the information.

In April we'll be publishing our first serial in our celebration issue. Leigh Lundin of the [Criminal Brief](#) has provided us with a truly fantastic story. I'm not going to give away any secrets, but you'll not want to miss out on it.

And speaking of not missing out, if you're reading this in the magazine itself, then you've got hold of something very special. Once again, we've got stories from Canada, the US, the UK, France and now Belgium.

Gladys Gregg, who is generally a writer of romantic stories keeps sending us really dark tales. That's OK with us because we keep publishing them. Gladys is our featured author this issue and her story "Community Living" can be found on page 15. Sylvia Reeve returns this issue with a truly heartening story of love and loss with her tale "For Elizabeth, A Rose" on page 6. Another returning author, Bonnie Way, tells us not only about love and loss, but has mixed forgiveness in there as well, with her story "Boots in the Hallway" on page 18. Allan Kalupar has returned as well with his story "Girl Trouble". I'm not sure that the trouble was the "Girl", but you'll have to read it on page 22 to know what I mean. Michael O'Shea

provides us with something completely different from his last story. Check out "Dancing Queen" on page 10. Gordon Arnold is our final returning author with his story "Error Code 1819" on page 29. As a former computer programmer, I confess that I occasionally fantasized about doing what his character did.

Not only do we have returning authors, but we have new ones as well. Herschel Cozine takes us back to a time when anything "New" was special with his story "New Baseball" on page 4. Vicki Chatham does some time travelling in her romantic story "The Hedge Witch" on page 12. Bernadette James shows us that when tragedy strikes, you can take the high road with her story "Halfway Up The Stairs" on page 21. We all have special days in our memory banks and J.E. Christer aptly describes one in her story "A Day to Remember" on page 26. Luke Bamforth reminds us about the dangers of jumping to conclusions with the "Getaway Fund" on page 34. Graham Andrews does a fantastic job of making you think that the details in "Witch Hazel" on page 37 are completely accurate. They aren't and he has taken creative liberties with history. Eileen Clifford has supplied us with "Memories" on page 40, reminding us that something good can come out of something bad. And Stanley Wright has written a truly spectacular tale on page 42. "The Swimmer" is a story that you'll want to read again and again.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and if you have something you'd like to share with us, please feel free to send an email to [info@pagesofstories.com](mailto:info@pagesofstories.com).

Happy reading everyone!

Darlene Poier, Publisher



# New Baseball

*By Herschel Cozine*

*Herschel Cozine has published extensively in the children's field. His stories and poems have appeared in many of the national children's magazines. Work by Herschel has also appeared in many crime and mystery magazines, anthologies as well as Woman's World magazine. His story, "A Private Hanging" was a finalist for the Derringer award. Retired from a career in electronics, he has resumed his writing career after an extended hiatus. Herschel lives with his wife, Sue, in Santa Rosa, California, close to his children and grandchildren*

\*\*\*\*\*

I was eleven years old. Living as I did in a small town with houses separated by acres of farmland, I had no birthday party. But my family was there. And cake and ice cream. And presents.

I picked up a small square package and unwrapped it in typical eleven year old fashion, ripping off the carefully prepared wrapping and tearing into the box. Inside was a baseball. White, with bright red stitches and the word "official" written in blue ink, it was a sight to behold. I had never seen or held a brand new baseball before. I marvelled at the brightness of it. It was magical.

I lifted it from the box with a reverence usually reserved for precious works of art. Transfixed by the beauty of the ball, I turned it over in my hands, drinking in every little feature of it. Never had I seen anything so beautiful.

Baseball was my passion. And back in those days we had no little league or organized sports. Looking back on it, we were fortunate. We played the game for the sheer fun of it, with no pressure from parents or

coaches to win. We were kids, playing a kid's game with boundless enthusiasm and determination, free from the responsibility of school work, chores and civilization itself. We played on the school grounds, vacant lots, front yards and even the cemetery parking lot. But never in all the times we played did we ever have a new ball. The ones we used were usually wrapped with black electrical tape. Some of the "newer" ones were scuffed beyond recognition, with stitches unravelling and a surface rougher than a New England country road.

I turned the shiny new ball over in my hand, revelling in the pristine beauty of it. My father - a mild mannered, silent man - beamed with pleasure as he watched my face.

"Well, son," he said. "What are you going to do with it?"

I looked into his eyes. I had no ready answer for him. It seemed a sacrilege to use it in a real game. There was probably not another ball like it in the entire universe.

But deep down inside I knew that baseballs were made to be hit with a bat. Their purpose was to provide kids like me with the tools necessary for a rousing game of sandlot baseball. It cried out to be used, whether I wanted to admit it or not.

"I don't know," I stammered, never taking my eyes from the incredible beauty of the ball.

"Don't you think it would be fun to play a game with your friends?"

"Yeah," I said. "I guess so." But I wasn't sure. To think of this work of art being desecrated by a grass stain or smudge from being hit was more than I could stand.

That night, as I settled into bed, I put the baseball on the nightstand. It would be the first thing I saw in the

morning. Gently, as if it would break if I handled it too roughly, I positioned it so the smooth unblemished surface, free of writing, faced me. The brilliant white, made even whiter by the bright red stitches, made my eyes water. I couldn't stop looking at it. Nothing in the world could be more beautiful than a new baseball.

The next morning was a Saturday. I woke to a sunny morning, yawned loudly and stretched. As I opened my eyes, I caught sight of the new baseball sitting on the nightstand. I reached over and picked it up, savoring the smooth feeling of the white horsehide and the delicate red stitches. I examined the stitches closely. 108 of them, each perfectly formed; an endless red road on a field of white.

A brand new baseball. Do you remember when "new" meant something special? You can find the rest of this story in the Winter 2011, available for purchase January 15.



# For Elizabeth, A Rose

*By Sylvia Reeve*

*Sylvia Reeve has regular columns in two monthly magazines as well as individual articles. She has a poem published in the 'Derbyshire Anthology' and has written a biography of her multi-handicapped foster son as well as two other novels. Now retired in Derbyshire with her husband, she manages her progressive lung disease and continually writes. Sylvia's story 'The Death Promise' was published in Issue #3 of Pages Of Stories.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Gerald stared at the lovely blooms in front of him. Never had he seen such perfection. Of all the roses in the garden, this was the one they had both loved the best. Perhaps it was because it was the last they bought together. Maybe it was because of its name. Whatever the reason, it was unimportant now.

He stared at the intricacy of it; each petal intertwined with the next, as if to say that even one missing petal would render it imperfect. The scent wafted towards him as the gentle early afternoon breeze, caused the bush to sway slowly from side to side. They had not realised how tall it would grow, or how abundantly it would bring forth its blooms. It dominated the whole garden. Gerald was glad they planted it in the centre. It was visible from all four corners of the plot, without hiding all its sister bushes, each profusely flowering. His eyes filled with tears, the guilty feeling locked deep in his heart caused him to have a lump in his throat almost making him choke.

"I'm sorry Elizabeth, please forgive me." He whispered as his gaze once more rested on the bush.

"Look at me, aren't I beautiful?" it seemed to be saying. Gerald quietly answered the unspoken plea from the delicate pink flowers.

"You are both beautiful." He whispered to the bush, "and the man was right, you are a vision that will live with me forever." He sighed and put his lifeless pipe into his mouth, then quickly took it out again, knowing 'she' wouldn't like it.

'What is the harm now though?' he tried to argue with himself. 'There is no tobacco in it anyway.' However, he laid it on the bench beside him and stared at the roses. It didn't seem possible that this thing of beauty could have unfolded from the dead looking brown twigs he had planted all those months ago. Six months to be exact...

'At a guess I would say around six months.' The man had told them. How those words etched on his mind. Six months almost to the day, he would not forget those words, or that day.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Find out what the significance is of "6 months" for Gerald and Elizabeth by purchasing the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories.**

# Dancing Queen

*By Michael O'Shea*

*Michael O'Shea resides in a small Warwickshire village and has been happily married to Nita for 40+ years. Michael enjoys music - anything from Sinatra to Springsteen; and reading - anything from Dickens to Kerouac. Michael was previously published in Issue #3 of Pages Of Stories with his work 'The Games People Play'.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Sarah tugged at her long dark curls and watched enviously as a statuesque blonde floated by in the arms of a handsome young man.

"I wish I could dance like that - with him, of course," she sighed. "He's so good looking and such a great dancer."

"Well you can't - neither of us can. Or ever will, for that matter."

Sarah turned to Jane, her oldest friend, "No need to class yourself with me, Jane. You're no slouch on the dance floor but when it was my turn to

get the soft shoe shuffle God must have been having a laugh."

"Rubbish. It's lack of confidence that's all. You just need to relax and believe in yourself. After a few drinks you're fine."

Sarah smiled, "No Jane; after a few drinks you **think** I'm fine. And maybe my brain kids itself that I am, but my two left feet know different. And to think that on the day I was born some poor devil somewhere must have ended up with two right ones."

Jane laughed out loud, "That's really funny," she said.

"No it's not; it's sad."

"It never used to bother you," said Jane, a hint of exasperation in her voice. "We'd come here Saturday nights and have a laugh no matter what; but since you clapped eyes on John Travolta you're no fun anymore. Why moon over him? You're pretty;

you don't need to be Olivia Newton John to get a man."

Sarah blushed slightly. She knew her friend was right. She was pretty, but it wasn't just any man she wanted - she wanted him. "Sorry if I'm being a pain," she said. "But I think I'm in love."

Jane rolled her eyes, "Pull the other one," she said. "You've no idea what he's really like and the one time he asked you for a dance you turned him down."

"That's because I'd have only made a fool of myself. Better to be a wallflower than a laughing stock."

"Well, this wallflower needs watering. Let's get a drink."

"Okay," said Sarah. "But one day my time will come, you'll see. And, by the way, his real name's David, and it's not John Travolta you should be comparing him to - it's Patrick Swayze."

\*\*\*\*\*

Does Sarah's time actually come? Read about the odd route this journey takes her by purchasing the Winter 2011 issue available for sale January 15.



# The Hedge Witch

*By Vicki Chatham*

*As a child, Vicki Chatham was the story teller for friends and family. Later, her three children became a demanding source for stories and she wrote a novel for her teenage daughter.*

*It wasn't until she came to Canada that Vicki became really serious about her writing. She has had short stories published in a number of magazine, including several Calgary magazines, the Calgary Herald and newsletters for both of the writing groups to which she belongs. She has served as Membership Director and Newsletter Editor for the Alexandra Writers Centre Society and is currently Program Chair for CaRWA (Calgary Association of Romance Writers of America). She teaches an 8-week Introductory Creative Writing Course at the Alexandra Centre when she can and is currently working on a Regency romance novel.*

*When not writing, Vicki enjoys reading and walking her dog.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*Lord John de Mountfort pressed his spurs into the grey mare's flanks and bent low over her flying mane as she galloped towards the distant castle. Her pounding hooves made*

*barely a sound in the lush green turf, but then she faltered and swerved.*

*"Cut! Cut! Cut!" The director's voice boomed out over the water meadow below Berkeley Castle. "For Chrissake, Martin, you poncey git – I thought you said you could ride!"*

*Martin Mitchell calmed the prancing mare with slow hand strokes on her neck as he turned and headed back to the camera crew.*

*"Donny, if I hadn't been able to ride I'd be on the deck by now. Something in the hedge scared her," he told the director who stood belligerently with his legs apart and hands fisted on his hips*

*"I knew I shouldn't work with animals," Donny returned. He looked skyward, squinting into the late morning sunshine. "OK, Martin. This light is not going to last. We'll do one more take, and get it right this time."*

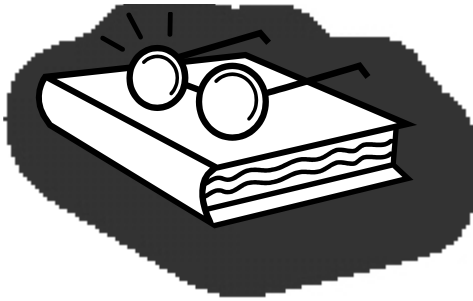
*Martin rode to his position at the gateway into the field where the film crew was set up. The low budget historical he was working on was not exactly his finest role but was, as his agent pointed out, a paying one. He positioned the mare along side the gate, and looked up at the turreted battlements in the distance. At least it was a real castle, in a real location, and not some fabrication on a back lot.*

*He heard Frank, the clapper boy, call out the scene and take number, felt the mare tense, anticipating Donny's call for action by a hairsbreadth. Then they were off. He heard her breath huffing out of her chest as he held the mare at a steady gallop. It was a simple direction. Follow the line of the hedge from the gate to a point level with the flagger who was already in place, rein in, turn, give the mare the signal to rear. The shot as it had been described to him should be brilliant.*

*The sound of the wind rushed in his ears, he had the oddest sensation of being covered in something light like gossamer and then the mare was shying again, tossing her head and backing away from the hedge. He hung on as before, trying to turn her in circles to slow her to a stop, noticing as he did so the bright red ribbons braided into her mane. He was almost sure they had not been there a moment ago.*

*"By the rood!" he swore. He shortened the reins again until the mare halted, her flanks heaving. He waited for Donny's bellow of displeasure and looked over his shoulder. The film crew was nowhere in sight.*

What happened to Martin? Find out by purchasing the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories, available for sale January 15.



## Need a second pair of eyes?

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# Community Living

*By Gladys Gregg*

*Check out our feature interview with Gladys Gregg. Gladys has been previously published in Pages Of Stories Issue #2 with her work 'The Flip Side'.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Maurice doesn't like it in "the community". That's what it's called, when they move you out. Living in the community.

He told them he didn't want to move. Over and over again, he told them. But they said it would be better for him.

He had liked living in Grangewood. They looked after him and he had friends there. He felt safe.

Now he has to cook for himself. Go food shopping. Stuff is cheaper in

Tesco but he doesn't like going there. People look at him.

He shops mostly in the Mini Market, on the corner. He has made friends with Shana, who works there. He likes Shana. She smiles at him and asks him how the world's treating him.

"Not too badly." he'll say. But he's telling lies.

His Dad used to beat him when he told lies. His Dad used to beat him for no reason at all. He'd take the belt down from the hook on the door and he didn't care if he sometimes swung it too high and it caught Maurice around the face. Said he deserved it. Said it would toughen him up.

Maurice doesn't want to tell Shana the truth. Because the truth is, the world isn't treating him well.

He wishes he could tell her what he's really thinking.

Shana always asks Maurice what he's been doing with himself. Where he's off out to that evening.

"A handsome guy like you must have lots of girls wanting to go out with you."

Maurice has never been out with a girl.

He would like to go out with Shana and he doesn't like it when she smiles and jokes with the men who come in to buy cigarettes and newspapers.

"No, I'm still looking, Maurice." She'd laughed. Shana was always laughing. She was a really happy person. "Do you know anybody who'd be interested."

Read about the consequences of Maurice living in the community. The complete story is available in the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories, on sale January 15.

# Getting to Know...



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## *An interview with author Gladys Gregg*

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Pages Of Stories recently did an email interview with our feature author, Gladys Gregg. While Gladys generally writes romantic stories, so far she has only submitted tales on the dark side to Pages Of Stories. We wanted to find out how this kindly and romantic woman is able to create such disturbing stories. We'd like to thank Gladys for her time.

\*\*\*\*\*

If you'd like to find out about this fascinating woman, you can purchase the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories available January 15.



# Boots in the Hallway

*By Bonnie Way*

*Bonnie is a freelance writer and editor whose work has been published in a variety of publications. She was previously published in the inaugural issue of Pages Of Stories with her work 'The Summer of Ed'. She is the editor of FellowScript, a quarterly writer's newsletter. When she's not writing, she's busy as a mom and wife.*

\*\*\*\*\*

The first time the doorbell rings, Christa ignores it. Everyone is already here and the kids had been playing with the doorbell earlier. She lines the watermelon up on the cutting board and brings the carving knife up, then down in a quick thwack. The doorbell rings again.

She frowns, leaning forward to peer through the kitchen window at the children playing in the backyard. Three parents stand near the swing set, chatting with each other while supervising the activities. She smiles at the hum of conversation rising from the living and dining rooms, then raises the knife over the melon again.

The front door closes with a thump and heavy footsteps come down the hallway.

It sounds like heavy, hard, steel-toed boots. The kind Greg used to wear.

A man steps into the kitchen. His broad shoulders are made broader by his red plaid jacket, curly beard neatly trimmed, thick brown hair brushed back off his forehead. He holds a black leather baseball cap in one hand.

"Mr. Davidson." She presses one hand against the counter, hoping he doesn't hear her voice falter.

"Mrs. Fisher," he returns with a nod, his eyes skimming the crowded living room. "Sorry to interrupt."

"Just the annual neighbourhood block party."

"I was hoping we could talk. Maybe another time is better."

"Yes. Another time." She studies the black buttons on his coat.

He fumbles for something in his back pocket. "My card." He holds out a slip of paper. "I'm in town for a few days. You can call me. When you have time."

She accepts the card, puts it down on the counter. "Yes." Black, manly block letters stare up at her: *Cal Davidson, long-haul trucker*, then a phone number with an area code she doesn't recognize.

"We'll talk later, then." He moves backwards.

"Yes," she says.

When he's gone, Janice breezes into the kitchen.

"Who was that?" she asks, plunking two empty pitchers of lemonade on the counter. Her eyes narrow at the empty hallway. "Was he the guy with Greg when... when it happened?"

"Yes." Christa turns back to the watermelon.

Janice peers at the business card. "What did he want?"

"To talk, he says." Christa slides the knife through the ripe red melon.

"About what?"

"I don't know." She raises the knife again.

"Are you going to?"

"I don't know." She brings the knife down on a slice of melon, cutting it in halves, then quarters, and stacks each piece on a plate.

Janice puts her hands on her hips. "Christa Fisher."

Christa holds up her hand. "The rumours aren't true, Janice. It was an accident. One person in the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't know what Mr. Davidson wants, but right now, we're having a party. If you make more lemonade, I'll take the kids their watermelon."

\*\*\*\*\*

What does Mr. Davidson want? Find out by purchasing the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories, available January 15.



# Halfway Up The Stairs

*By Bernadette James*

*Bernadette James lives in Surrey, England. She has had numerous short stories published in women's magazines in the UK and abroad and has been published in several short story anthologies. She has also been placed or shortlisted in competitions both for poetry and for short fiction.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*I*t has taken me a long time to come back to this place. For many years I thought I never would, but passing years have faded the memory a little and now here I am. I had to come after all. The steps don't look much different really, maybe a bit smaller than before and the perspective is different, but then I was so much smaller too and my perspective on a lot of things has changed. I don't know what I expected to find, coming here after so long.

I have parked my car a little way away from the house and am looking

back towards it. It is in a terrace of houses all the same and still looks grey and old and rather shabby but not as forbidding as it once appeared. The streets around it have changed more; charity shops, fast food restaurants with their painfully bright signs and estate agents. The area looks pretty much like everywhere else now, apart from the old grey building with the old stone steps leading up to the front door, where I used to sit, exactly halfway up.

Looking back it seems as though it was someone else who used to sit there and in a way I suppose it was. I don't feel the same things that I felt then or have the same thoughts. I never think of running away or walking into the sea and not stopping. I am lucky now. But in other ways it is still me and inside I weep for the child I was who was never allowed to be a child, for the things I missed and the things I suffered.

There are fifteen steps in all, worn smooth at the centre of each by many years of footfalls, creating a shallow indent just right for a child's seat. Eight is my lucky number, so I used to sit halfway up – eight from the top, eight from the bottom. I got the best view from there, without being too close to the house. Those steps were a retreat for me – an escape from the noise and harshness. There was always shouting inside, always the threat of more to come, never a time to play or be carefree. If he was there we were afraid, my mother and I. If he was not there we were waiting for him to come home, anxious of the amount he would have drunk or the money he would have lost, and of what that would translate into for us. The house was grey on the outside and we were grey inside it. At least on the steps I didn't have to watch and the sounds were muffled.

**Find out what the significance is of those steps and the twist at the end of this story. It's available in the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories, on sale January 15.**



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# Girl Trouble

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*By Allan Kalupar*

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*Allan Kalupar has enjoyed the outdoors all his life. His love and appreciation for weekend adventures served as the inspiration for this tale. This is the third story of Allan's that Pages Of Stories has published. You can find his other work in Issue #2 and Issue #3.*

\*\*\*\*\*

“Come on Angie, this is BLUE, it's supposed to be MIDNIGHT BLACK with a clear coat so shiny you could see the stars reflecting at night”. A very pissed off Mike blasted Angelina Andrades when he came to take delivery of his new baby. Mike continued while staring at the sales agreement placing a heartened emphasis on the colours.

“Here's the sales sheet – 2010 Mustang Cobra Convertible, 4.6L V8 engine, color EBONY CLEARCOAT. Show me where it says BLUE”. Mike wouldn't even bring himself to look into the delicate dark eyes of the saleslady before throwing the contract on the floor in disgust and storming out. Mike's recent track record with the ladies wasn't too great and he knew that better than anyone. He was determined not to let this Greek Goddess talk him into anything further. He was already putting himself in way more debt than he had ever experienced before, mainly as a reaction to the way he just got unceremoniously dumped.

“Mike wait a sec,” Angie called after him, her commission at stake. Her heels clacked across the asphalt parking lot as she struggled to catch up to Mike as he was about to get into a 1978 Mercury Grand Marquis. His Dad was gracious enough to lend him the wheels for the last couple weeks since he totalled his Saturn when some farmer in a rusty 78 Ford half ton ran a

red light and t-boned him on the passenger side. A panting Angie continued, “Hey I know you wanted it black, but just come and take another look at this one. There are a few things I want to show you on it. I think you just might change your mind. If you decide you don't want it – fine we'll get you the black one. It's just they are so popular; it would be another few weeks.”

Reluctantly Mike followed in the saleslady's shadow back towards the blue mustang, trying desperately but unsuccessfully to avoid the perfect curves strolling provocatively in front of him.

Glad to have her swagger back, Angie continued her mission to save the sale. “Check this baby out, it's got all the options you wanted and even a few more we can let you have no charge. Go ahead and get behind the wheel and check out the stereo.” Mike got in as Angie opened the door for him, her ramblings continued seemingly without end. “This color, it's so you. Why would you want a black one that is so common? Black screams out I'm the man and I don't care who you are. Blue on the other hand...blue exudes class, and you my friend have class. Look at her, this baby just sparkles. Just wait until the ladies see you with the top down. You'll be calling to thank me. Here, take a few of my cards, your friends will want them. Trust me.” Mike reluctantly caught a whiff of her perfume and before taking her cards. His buddies may not buy a car from her, but more than a couple would come to check her out.

Mike pulled out of the parking lot in his new blue Mustang. He had signed the next five years of his life away in payments and was confident that as soon as he pulled away Angie would get the black one brought out from the back for someone else, probably a

dorky cousin or some other dope who couldn't say no to her.

He was struggling with an inner turmoil. He was second guessing himself a lot these days. He wasn't sure if it was because he really started to like the looks of this one or if he let himself get talked into it. Either way it was his now and there was no turning back. He drove south on Waverley Street about ten minutes until he got to highway 101. The wind whipping through his sandy blonde hair as he accelerated, convinced him it didn't matter. He drove home, picked up his Dad and returned to the dealer to pick up the Grand Marquis.

Back on the road after dropping off his Dad, he was cruising around highway 101 once again. His thoughts were bouncing back and forth from his new wheels to his girl Connie. To be more accurate, ex-girl Connie. They were in love, or at least Mike thought so and everything was going so good.

The next thing you know he hits the bar for a few beers and hot wings with a couple buddies and finds Connie engaged in an intense lip lock in the corner with Leonard, her study partner from last term. Mike wasn't that upset over being dumped. It happens to everyone now and then – but to embarrass him in front of his buddies in his normal hangout crossed the line. And with a guy named Leonard. Not Len, Leonard.

Connie tried explaining how her and Leonard just hit it off at school and had so much in common it just happened. She didn't mean to hurt him she'd said.

Cruising around in the new Mustang Mike was proud of himself for taking the high road. He stayed calm, didn't make a scene and believing in Karma like he does, knew deep down everything would be alright. That didn't



stop an adrenalin rush that crept up on him resulting in a fist slammed against the steering wheel followed by screaming loud enough for the geese flying a mile overhead to hear.

"But why the hell did you have to do it there?" Mike screamed. Calming back down again he was glad it was before this weekend getaway. Connie and he had plans to join two other couples at Marc's cabin for three days of beach, waterskiing and fun.

The guys told him to still come out and forget about her. Easy enough said, but two couples and one single guy doesn't make for a good time for the single guy. Then again he'd known all the others for years.

"What the hell" he said aloud to himself and then continued "nothing better to do around town, besides this baby needs a highway run to break it in!" Mike cranked up the stereo. 'Radar Love' by Golden Earring, one of his all time favorite cruising tunes came on and he headed for his apartment to pack.

"Let's see, sleeping bag, swimsuit, lotion, bug dope, shaving kit and a couple changes of clothes in the back

pack. A twenty four of Molson, a half dozen of rib eyes and a bag of his Mom's homemade perogies in the cooler. Yup, good to go" Mike went over his packing list to himself, threw the stuff in the trunk, put the rag top down and was on his way to Marc and Jen's cabin on the beautiful Lake Winnipeg. Mike enjoyed heading up there the occasional weekend since Marc and Jen bought the place two summers ago. It was a little smaller than most, but being right on the lake more than made up for it.

As he was about to exit onto highway 59 Mike was running through the list of what he brought before it was too late to turn back. Unfortunately for him, no matter how hard he tried to avoid it, like an irritating song on the radio, stuck in the back of his mind was Connie. Seven months of his life wasted. Wasted for a guy named Leonard. Mike went back to his daily daydream where he hauled Leonard out in the parking lot and laid a good old fashioned ass whuppin' on him. It made him smile, but he still never regretted taking the high road. Laying a beating on a nerd would have felt

good, real good. But afterward people would be down on him for pummeling a wimp half his size, even if he did deserve it. Mike's thoughts quickly changed for the better. He chuckled to himself and thought about Angie. Just maybe she was right and he would pick himself up a fox lady in his new set of wheels.

Still smirking to himself, Mike couldn't believe the coincidence. He shook his head in disbelief and then checked his rear view mirror. Sure enough he had just passed a real looker on the side of the road. A stunning redhead was trying in vain to fix a flat tire on her bike. Mike cruised up another mile before finding an intersection at a cross road where he could turn around. He passed the damsel in distress heading back toward the city in the southbound lane. After hanging another u-turn on the divided highway he was back heading north and pulled over on the shoulder just in front of her. Getting out of his car he confirmed that his passing glance was correct. This girl was smoking hot.

Three girls have been mentioned so far. Which one is the "trouble"? Is she actually the problem or is it him? Tell me what you think when you've read this story in the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories. Available for sale January 15.



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# A Day to Remember

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*By J. E. Christer*

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*Jeannette was born in Barton upon Humber, North Lincolnshire, England in October 1951.*

*She married a police officer and had two beautiful daughters who have produced eight precious grandchildren. Jeannette works full time as a legal secretary and has published three books set in Cornwall and Barton respectively.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Betty stood back on the pavement and looked up at the new sign above her little shop and smiled. She had bought it with the money her aunt had left her a few months ago, before she could squander it on a holiday or some other luxury she couldn't normally afford. The background to the sign was dark blue but the silver lettering declaring 'Betty's Books' stood out as if in 3D and beckoned people through the door. At least *she* thought it did, but time would tell.

She pushed the door open and a little brass bell tinkled to announce her arrival. The new bookshelves had been delivered and now their emptiness surrounded her and all at once the enormity of her undertaking became a

reality. How on earth was she to do all the work needed to turn the shop into a viable business? It was at times like this that she wished she hadn't been so impetuous, but knew deep down, that this little venture was a dream come true. It hadn't been too expensive as it wasn't on the High Street, but occupied a mid-terrace position between an electrical repair shop and a post office, so passing trade would be useful.

At the back of this narrow Victorian building was a small kitchen which still bore witness to its previous incarnation as a pet food shop, with bits of *Bonio* and cat biscuits of some description strewn around the floor and under the sink. Someone obviously hadn't cleaned up very well before they left. "Never mind," she said aloud to herself, "onward and upward".

Betty straightened her back and walked with a determined step to the back door. It opened onto a small paved area with a dustbin and a brick shed which had seemed bigger when she had first inspected the property, but had now shrunk to the size of a dog kennel. A wooden gate opened out onto the car park where her beloved

Mini was standing; it seemed to be listing to one side and she could almost hear it groaning under the weight of books destined to fill some of the shelving.

"Good morning." She looked up to see who was speaking to her and noticed a red van parked outside the back of the post office. There was a man leaning into the back of it loading it with sacks of post, and assumed it must have been him.

"Good morning," she replied and leaned into her own car to lift out some boxes.

"Nice day," came the disembodied voice again.

"Yes, indeed," Betty replied as she struggled to lock the car and balance boxes at the same time. So intent was she on her task that she didn't see or hear him approach and the first she knew of his proximity was when a tanned, muscular arm reached over and took the boxes from her.

"Oh, you s-startled me!" she stuttered as her keys fell to the floor.

Is it this day that's special? Is there another day? What makes it special? Find out by purchasing the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories. Available for sale January 15.



# Error Code 1819

*By Gordon Arnold*

*Gordon Arnold is a long-time journalist within putting distance of retirement. Since 1966 he has worked as a reporter and editor at weekly and daily newspapers across Western Canada. Most of that time has been spent at the Winnipeg Free Press, where he is currently employed as a senior copy editor and web editor. This is the third story of Gordon's that Page Of Stories has published. You'll find his first one in Issue #2 and next one in Issue #3. Each one is completely different from the last. Gordon was also our feature interview in Issue #3.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*"I'm telling you to fix it or you won't get another cent from us. Fix it. Or not a penny." A heavy fist mashed off the video phone. Colleagues said it was easy to tell when Emery Fremont was angry by the way his thinning gold curls trembled.*

*Emery Fremont was owner of United Federations Communications. Five years ago, he had gained a monopoly on all distribution of electronic communications in the United States. From television programming to private e-mails, he had it all. Whether an e-com was destined for one individual or a billion, United Fed was the only game in town. Advertisers could attach a sales pitch to any or all of these e-coms, from a simple e-mail between friends to a blockbuster movie with an audience of millions or the evening game shows.*

*The idea began with a little startup in Massachusetts around the start of the new millenium. Researchers there had developed an artificial intelligence system to collect data about consumers based on the websites they visited – click-by-click tracking, as it*

*came to be known – and then used this data to target pop-up advertising.*

*Within 18 months, click-by-click had been picked up by a small company in California, where the idea was transformed into profiling software built into every TV's receiver. Advertisers could even track whose hand was on the remote – Mom, Dad or the resident teens. Using this state-of-the-art click-by-click, advertising that streamed in with TV programs differed from house to house, and from viewer to viewer.*

*Elegant in its simplicity, the theory wasn't working. Advertising messages weren't getting out and Emery Fremont was going to have someone's hide for it, before the shareholders discovered the breakdown and had his.*

*Noah Asamoah, the chief troubleshooter for Techtrac Inc., the consortium of technical boffins hired on contract by United Fed to keep their system running, had been testing the master program for 36 straight hours.*

*"We don't know, Mr. Fremont. It should work. There's no reason for it not to. We've run, and re-run, the master and it checks out every time. There's got to be a worm in there somewhere, and we'll just have to keep at it until we find it."*

*Emery Fremont drew himself up to the full height of his six-foot, 195 pound frame, smoothed down his trembling curls, lowered his voice another half decibel and said, "Well find it, or I'll personally destroy you and your company." He knew it would only be a matter of days before all the shareholders found out. Hours in some cases. How long could he stall them? Long enough for those fools from SI to get things working again? He hoped so. Because if not, he too faced a bleak future. He didn't fancy a return to*

*the programming pit from which he had climbed 20 years ago. His career only really began to take off after he joined the spam-buster team in Dubya's White House. But there was no serious coin in spam busting, so after a barely decent interval, he quit, and switched sides.*

*There followed in quick succession a series of jobs, and moves....Brazil, Spain, India, The Netherlands... wherever a major spammer had set up shop. From each, Fremont learned more about mass communication theory and practice than he ever did at college. By the time he grew tired of this gypsy-like existence, he had an extensive web of contacts and clients.*

*Spotting a young company he thought had potential, he gambled everything on what most of his colleagues dismissed as a snot.com. The company was full of bright, ambitious and not too scrupulous young programmers who had overextended themselves financially. Fremont zoomed in on this weakness, cobbled together a group of shareholders and bought out United Fed. Using all the contacts he had made on both sides of the fence, he drove the company into a communications monopoly protected – despite much grumbling about its illegality – by presidential decree. That decree had cost him a rather large fortune in campaign contributions, but it was worth it.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*In San Francisco, it was nine hundred hours when senior communications consultant Regina Shelton marched into her office at TransAmerica Group. Yesterday afternoon, TransAmerica had launched its biggest-ever sales program for a client. She called in her principal*



secretary, Alain Christophe. "Get me the returns on yesterday's launch."

"Right away." He hit the appropriate sequence. There was a beep. The terminal screen went green with blinking zeroes. And Alain went white. Trembling, he punched the combination again. The old witch didn't like mistakes, stupid or otherwise. Again he got a screen full of zeroes.

"Well, how much?" Shelton demanded.

The secretary's voice quavered. "Nothing."

"What?" Shelton barked.

"Nothing." Now Alain's entire body was shaking. Alain sat down and clicked through the screens to retrieve the click-by-click from United Fed's central database. In nanoseconds, the click-by-click, with all its variables, flashed on the screen.

"So why aren't we showing returns?" Shelton demanded.

"Look at the top of the screen. The click-by-click went to United Fed but it was never redistributed to our target

markets," Alain explained, patiently if somewhat nervously.

"Impossible. Send it through again."

Alain finished clicking through the screens again and his gasp drew Regina Shelton's attention back to the screen. There it was, flashing in angry red capitals

ERROR CODE 1819

INPUT PROBLEM DETECTED

Shelton bared her teeth and snarled. "Get me Emery Fremont."

\*\*\*\*\*

What does this mean? Find out how this error code has the power to change the behaviour of governments and businesses. The whole story is now in the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories, available for sale January 15.

# Getaway Fund

*By Luke Bamforth*

*Luke currently lives in South Wales although he is originally from Sheffield in England. He spends his time writing short fiction and contributing short articles to a local small press magazine. He has travelled extensively in his youth, but is now enjoying discovering what the UK has to offer, especially in terms of inspiration.*

\*\*\*\*\*

John wondered how his wife could find anything in amongst all the rubbish she had in her bedside cabinet.

"Have you found it yet?" his wife called from the kitchen downstairs.

"Not yet," he called back, adding, "I don't know why you can't look for it yourself."

"Lucy will be round for dinner soon and I've barely started cooking." She replied.

John shook his head and continued looking for Helen's car insurance documents.

"Besides, you're the one that reversed my car into a bollard!"

That made John cringe, if any of his workmates found out he had reversed into a bollard, especially while driving his wife's banana yellow hatchback, he'd be a laughing stock.

As he rooted through the untidy mass of paperwork he casually glanced at each piece on the off chance they were the right documents.

One document stood out as he picked it up. It was from a bank. John hadn't realised that Helen had her own account. According to the statement she had saved £5,103.33.

*What does she need that sort of money for?* John asked himself running a hand through his thinning, grey hair.

He was curious and more than a little concerned. Only yesterday he had caught the end of a program discussing the increase of married women who kept secret bank accounts to help them leave their husbands.

*Helen wouldn't leave me, would she?* He thought. He had never doubted their marriage before, but the more he dwelled on it the more he realised that they had drifted apart emotionally since their daughter had left home. Helen had said that she thought he spent too much time at work.

*But she wouldn't just leave without talking about it.*

Helen shouted up the stairs nervously, "On second thoughts perhaps I should look for it."

"It's all right. I'm up here now."

John heard Helen coming up the stairs. Her sudden change of mind seemed to lend weight to his concerns. As she reached the top of the stairs he quickly folded the statement and put it in his trouser pocket.

"You'll never find it in all that mess. Don't worry I've got a system." The apron she had tied to her bonny frame had failed to keep flour from getting in her blonde, grey hair.

John looked back at the drawer and to his astonishment saw the documents he had been looking for staring up at him. He quickly snatched them up and slammed the cabinet shut.

"I've got them." He said waving the papers at his wife.

Helen smiled with what appeared to John to be relief. "Great, well I'll get back to the cooking."

"You want some help?"

"John, you've never offered to help cook in all the years I've known you. Are you coming down with something?"

"A man can change."

Helen laughed. "Why don't you just make yourself presentable? I'll handle the catering."

John couldn't quite make the smile on his lips reach his brown eyes as his wife turned around and made her way back downstairs.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out the bank statement. He knew the bank. There was a branch near his work. During his lunch he'd go and get some answers from them. He could always confront his wife, but there was no point burning his bridges just yet.

What does John find out about the money? You can find out by purchasing the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories. Available for sale January 15.



# Witch Hazel

*By Graham Andrews*

Graham Andrews was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, but has lived in Belgium since 1982. His science fiction novel, *Darkness Audible*, was published by the Excalibur Press of London in 1991. He has had short stories, articles, and book reviews in a number of different publications. He won the 1981 Aisling Gheal ('Bright Vision') Award of the Irish Science Fiction Association for his short story, 'The Para-Present'. His prize-winning one-act play, 'The Man Who Met His Maker', was published in 2004. *The Last Pixel Show* followed in 2009. He is a regular contributor of science fiction obituaries for other publications.

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## PROLOGUE

The year is 1757. Ingrid Pitt has just become England's first Secretary of State.

Colin Clive conquers

Bengal for the Irish East India Company. Sir Walter Scott visits London, where he sees David Garrick in *As You Lick It*.

Britain and France are disputing the ownership of the large island (area: 5,657 km<sup>2</sup>) which lies to the north-east of Canada: Ile St. John. Or, as the British prefer to call it, St. John's Island. The Macmic Indians know the

place as *Minagoo* (i.e. the Island) and, more poetically, *Abegweit* ('cradled on the waves').

Today, however, it is Canada's smallest province – Prince Edward Island. Red soil. Azure skies. Lush vegetation about neat farmhouses. Sweeping beaches washed by Northumberland Strait and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. *Anne of the Seven Green Gables* performed at the Charlottetown Festival.

\*\*\*\*\*

"It's been an exhausting trip for these homesteaders," Mel Cameron told himself. He surveyed the rough encampment that held some two hundred people and eleven wagons. Concern tightened his already too-thin mouth. "But we've got to keep putting a long distance between ourselves and those Native Americans who burned down the settlement."

For going on eight hours, now, Cameron had scouted the impromptu wagon train's route along the narrow forest trails, which were lined with silver birch and maple trees. Some of the older folk were beginning the show the ill-effects of their arduous trek. Even his own lean, well-tempered body ached in protest, but fatigue was an unaffordable luxury.

Although Cameron would have preferred to carry on regardless, he felt obliged to heed the advice of –

"Lost in thought, Mel?" James Sanderson, M.D. hove into view. "Shame on you. I could've been a French patrol. Or one more pesky Amerindian war party."

"Point taken, Doc." Cameron did little to hide his pique at having been caught out by the hefty sawbones. "Though you're making as much noise as both mobs combined – plus a platoon of redcoats."

Doc Sanderson made no attempt at feigning lordly indifference.

"Redcoats be damned! The Brits have their hands full elsewhere. We can't expect any help from that quarter. Not until we reach Port La Joye. If . . ."

"Hold your horses." Cameron experimented with a smile. "What seems to be the problem?"

"There's no 'seems to be' about it! I've told you before. We haven't enough wagon space for everyone to ride."

"So?"

"So have you seen any witch hazel shrubs around here? I can boil some bark and leaves. The walking wounded can bathe their sore muscles in the tannin extract."

The Irish East India Company? Anne of the Seven Green Gables? Not exactly the history you took in school. And what impact does witch hazel have on any of this? Find out by purchasing the Winter 2011 issue of *Pages Of Stories*. Available for purchase January 15.



# Memories

*By Eileen Clifford*

*Married to Jeff for 48 years and with a grownup family, eleven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren there was never a lot of free time to indulge in creating things over the years. However, she is mainly an artist and has held several exhibitions and been featured in the cat fanciers magazine whilst involved in that world. Since retiring, she has been able to indulge herself in her artistic activities and leads groups with others sharing her interests in local community rooms. She has had several stories and articles published in the past and hope there'll be more successes in the future. At present she is attempting to write a fictional book and also one on knitwear design in between editing many short stories that have been gathering dust for quite some time.*

\*\*\*\*\*

A stray sunbeam reflecting off the face of the clock made it appear to wink; attracting Bella's attention and drawing her out of a deep reverie. Sending her thoughts off at a tangent; bringing to the surface buried memories that were bittersweet.

Placing her knitting on the table she left her chair and strolled across to

the clock where she began tracing the design engraved on the dial with gentle finger tips. It was a truly beautiful picture of a Devon Rex. Not just any Devon, however, but Bella's own cat Lucy. The artist had made a perfect job of it, capturing Lucy's character exactly. But then she should because Lucy's breeder and the artist was one and the same person. John admired the woman's work tremendously and had secretly commissioned the clock as a wedding anniversary present for her – their sixth.

Her mind skittered reluctantly around thoughts of Lucy's breeder, one Veronica Hazelton. A force to be reckoned with in the cat fancy, for her breeding line was one of the best, producing winner after winner on the show circuit. Nevertheless, she had proved unpopular with some of the other exhibitors for a different reason. Building quite a reputation for herself because of the humorous names she chose to register her kittens under. Names which many considered disrespectful to the breed. This latter raised a glimmer of a smile on Bella's face as she recalled Lucy's official title of Grand Champion Bellissimo Lucy Lastic. Oh... How it had caused those

detractors to cringe when it had been published – yet again – on another official awards list in the fancy's leading publication.

How amused she had been the first time she had heard the name. It had a certain ring to it. And, what's more, she'd thought it suited the breed's quirky character to perfection. Devon's being natural clown's, she still couldn't understand why others deemed such names disrespectful.

Bella ran her fingers over the delicate lines of the etching again, registering how each one captured the fluid movement of a typical member of this pixie-like breed and remembering how overjoyed she had been on receiving the gift.

Sighing, she dropped her hand to her side, wondering if removing the clock from her home might help, but then there was Lucy. She loved her cat more than words could say but her constant presence prevented Bella from putting the past behind her, where it belonged, and moving on. No way could she forget the day her world had collapsed around her.

\*\*\*\*\*

What happened to turn Bella's life upside down?  
Find out by purchasing the Winter 2011 issue of  
Pages Of Stories, available for sale January 15.



# InScribe



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# The Swimmer

*By Stanley Wright*

*Stanley Wright lives and works in France.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*I*t was just before eight in the morning when I crossed the road from my hotel and sat down on a large rock facing the sea to enjoy my first cigarette of the day. My business conference was over, the other delegates had all gone home, but I had promised myself the luxury of a free day in the spring sunshine before returning to England. It had been a very stressful few days on the French coast and I needed to unwind.

I noticed that my only companion on the shore that morning was a very old, grey and white dog of indeterminate breed which ignored me but kept its gaze fixed firmly on the incoming tide. I soon realised why.

Shortly, out of the water emerged a thin, wizened old man, wearing only a pair of black bathing shorts. He must have been at least seventy, with a mane of long white hair which he

shook, in the manner of an animal, as he climbed out of the waves. He had a strange, wild look in his eyes, but the dog seemed pleased to see him. The man retrieved a hand towel to wipe his face, but he made no attempt to dry the rest of his dripping, leathery skin. He nodded to me, sat down on an adjacent rock, and pulled from behind it a large round tin.

I watched, fascinated, as he dipped a hand into the tin and proceeded to spread some kind of grease over his body: first his arms and legs, then his torso, and finally his weather beaten face.

"It is today. I am ready," he announced, I thought to me although he was constantly gazing out to sea.

"Tomorrow the tide is much stronger and the current too dangerous. So it must be today."

The old man realised I had not understood. "Today I swim across the bay and back," he continued. "It is something I must do for my own pleasure and satisfaction: something I

have wanted to achieve for many years."

I looked out across the waves towards the small village with brown-roofed houses which were just visible in the morning haze.

"That's a long way," I commented. "It must be, what? Seven, eight miles?"

"Sixteen kilometres each way," he corrected. "Twenty miles there and back if you prefer."

"Are you quite sure you can manage that distance?" I asked anxiously. The old man looked reasonably fit and healthy, but he did not carry the bulk of most long-distance swimmers.

"Do you have an escort boat?" I asked again. "Someone to accompany you to give you food or a drink on the way? Twenty miles is almost the width of the English channel from Dover to Calais. Not many people are capable of such a feat."

The old man laughed.

"No boat, no escort," he replied. "I swim alone."

Does he make it across? Something very strange happens at the end of this story. Find out what by purchasing the Winter 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories, available January 15.



*Thank  
You*

