

Issue # 6

Summer 2011





life experience



WE BELIEVE
THAT LIFE IS
BETTER WHEN
SHARED.

Sheraton Cavalier
Calgary Hotel
2620 32 Avenue NE
Calgary, AB T1Y 6B8
P- 403-291-0107
F-403-291-2834

sheratoncavaliercalgary.com

Table of Contents

Publisher's Say	4
Skeletons	5
The Morning After	8
Crossing Point	11
Untenable	14
The Last Pixel Show	18
Getting to Know...	24
With Friends Like This	25
Following Allan	27
Return to Teal Marsh	29
The Visit	32
Emily's Ghost Story	34
Travels With My Uncle	37
Food for Thought	42
Crying Wolf	44
Turtle Bay	46

Owned by
Pages Of Stories Inc.

Copyright 2011
Pages Of Stories Inc.

Publisher and Editor
Darlene Poier

Website:
www.pagesofstories.com

Follow us on Facebook:
[Facebook.com/Pages Of
Stories](https://www.facebook.com/Pages-Of-Stories)

Follow our blog:
[onlinefictionstories.
blogspot.com/](http://onlinefictionstories.blogspot.com/)

For information regarding advertising, story submission or purchasing a subscription, please visit our website at

[www.pagesofstories.com /contact](http://www.pagesofstories.com/contact) or send an email to
info@pagesofstories.com.

All stories are purely fictional and any resemblance to any person or situation is coincidental.



Alberta Magazine
Publishers Association



Photo by BellaTasha Images; bellatasha_images@hotmail.com

Publisher's Say

Summer has finally arrived here! I'm not sure what your winter was like where you are, but for us it feels like we haven't had summer in two years. So this weather we're having is a welcome relief.

One of the reasons I love summer is that it's an opportunity to see the sun, get out and visit with neighbours that you haven't seen since the first snow fall so many months ago and it's an ideal time to rest, relax and rejuvenate. In order to accomplish this, many people spend a lot more time reading, gardening, and vacationing.

For me, I try to do all three. The last one is impossible, for a little while anyway. Once this issue of the magazine is out I'm going to spend some time reading.

You'd think that I would have had enough reading in preparing for this issue, but nope! I particularly enjoy reading online. I find it a bit easier on my eyes, it's no longer awkward carrying your online world with you and the best part is there's more and more reading options every day! I think the number of magazines that now have an online option has increased tenfold since we started this one 15 months ago.

A few weeks ago I attended a luncheon where the guest speaker was Evan Hansen, editor-in-chief of Wired.com. I went away from that lunch not only with a full stomach, but with the understanding that it's a different state of mind between a paper based magazine, and an online one. Also, technology is always changing and we must be ready to adapt to and take advantage of these changes.

But it's not only technology that drives change, the market demands it.

We must be ready to accommodate, within reason, what our readership wants.

So, at Pages Of Stories we'll be doing that in a couple of different ways. First, our website will have to change a little bit in order to accommodate some of our new additions. One of those additions is the Author Page. Not yet well named, but this will be a section of the website given over to authors. You, our reader will get an opportunity to find out more about your favourite Pages Of Stories authors, and the authors will get the opportunity to showcase some of their other work. I'm quite excited about this, I have the page built, but not yet the time to implement it. Keep your eyes peeled for a notice from me when it's up and running!

As for the other additions we plan on making - oops! I'm running out of space if I want to tell you about all the entertaining stories inside.

I'll get right to it! Once again we have a truly international group of authors from Canada, the US, the UK, France and Belgium. A big thanks to freelancemarketnews and the Irish resource <http://writing.ie/> for spreading the word about Pages Of Stories. And a special thank you to contributing authors of the [Criminal Brief](#). Leigh Lundin is back with us with Part II (page 14) of his serial. If you've read Part I, you'll need to find out what's going on! And John Floyd (page 46) is back with us again with Turtle Bay. Sometimes palm readers are correct, and sometimes ... well ... you'll just have to read the story to find out what I mean. And a newcomer to Pages Of Stories and a guest columnist on Criminal Brief, is Fran Rizer (page 34)

who writes about a ghost, but not just any ghost. The Criminal Brief will once again be featuring Pages Of Stories this weekend so check them out!

But we have so much more. Stanley Wright (page 5) is back with us with a story and a character that rivals Hercule Poirot. Gordon Arnold (page 29) has returned with a real page turner about a returning WWI vet. To lighten things up, we have newcomer Rebecca Mansell with The Visit (page 32). You really must read that one until the end, it's not what you expect. And Fiona Law (page 8) has written us a story about the morning after the night of drinking and merry making. I'm sure many of us can relate.

Graham Andrews (page 18) has given us another story, this time on trying to resolve a computer bug. But this is no ordinary computer bug. It's a supernova computer bug. Allison Heward (page 27) shows us that even Orlando Bloom lookalikes, can make challenging boyfriends. Lynn Cain (page 11) has returned to us with a story that will make you appreciate your in-laws. Michael O'Shea (page 37) is also back with us with a story about family secrets. Donna Dawson (page 25) is our feature author this month and she's brought us another fabulous whodunit that will give those Criminal Brief folks a run for their money!

Another newcomer, Helen Finch (page 42) writes about getting on with life after loss, and last but not least is Judy Upton (page 44) with some science-fiction, but it has an environmental message as well.

Take care and happy reading!

Darlene Poier, Publisher

Skeletons

By Stanley Wright

A Scot living in France for the past eight years, Stanley has been a journalist, lecturer, owner of a hotel/restaurant. He spent two years travelling around the world as a freelance journalist and lecturer. Now in semi-retirement, he writes articles and short stories for various UK magazines, has published two 'how to' books, and is 50,000 words into a novel. This is Stanley's third time being published in Pages Of Stories. You can check out his other work in the previous issues.

“My story, gentlemen, concerns ‘cadavres dans le placard’. In English I think you have the same expression Sir Marcus, .. how do you say? ... skeletons in the cupboard? There are four of them with a common link.”

The speaker glanced around his audience, their four faces partly hidden in deep armchairs, illuminated only by the flickering light from the log fire which was burning low. They all looked at the speaker, but remained silent.

Sir Marcus Dove, Her Majesty's Foreign Secretary and host, shifted uneasily in his chair and checked the level of his brandy glass. Until a few moments ago the speaker had been unknown to him. He was annoyed that the fellow had somehow insinuated himself into the group gathered in the library to swap stories, but he was too polite to enquire further at this late stage. Dove was very selective in his choice of late night guests. Invitations to stay over after dinner at Downlands were much prized, and were issued only when it was felt that the guest could contribute a good yarn. Under another name, Dove wrote mystery stories and he was not averse to using and elaborating on his guests' tales for his latest collection of 'whodunits'.

The other three men Dove knew well. Enrico Baracello, the Italian Minister for Transport, was a favourite member of Dove's group, and was in fact a distant relative. Otto Munz, from the German Finance Ministry, was making a welcome return, having enthralled the gathering on previous occasions with outrageous stories of intrigue in the Berlin Chancellories. Henri von Roos, the Dutch Ambassador to the Court of St. James, a first time visitor, had proved as dull as his story and was unlikely to be invited again. The speaker was the puzzle. If they had met and been introduced at dinner along with the twenty five other guests .. and Sir Marcus assumed they had .. he couldn't remember the fellow's name. He spoke English with a French accent, and seemed perfectly at ease in the group. But who was he?

“Skeletons in the cupboard eh?” repeated Sir Marcus. He glanced at the others to make sure they understood the expression. “There are plenty of them around.”

What skeletons will be revealed? Who is the speaker?

Find out by purchasing the July 15 issue.



Located in the heart of the Kensington Village shopping and entertainment district, Pages is Calgary's literary meeting place.

Be sure to check out our [website](#) for our ongoing literary events.

And follow us on Facebook!

1135 Kensington Road NW
Calgary, Alberta
T2N 3P4, Canada
Ph. (403) 283-6655
Fx. (403) 283-6676



imagine it in writing



Pages
of Stories

presents

1,2,3 ... You're Published!

Learn writing, editing and publishing tips from
2 very different perspectives.
Plus... a special live editing event!

Saturday, September 17, 2011
9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Sheraton Cavalier Calgary Hotel
2620 - 32nd Ave NE, Calgary

Cost: \$199 + GST

For Further Information and to Register Please Contact

Laura Crowe, Editor
Imagine It In Writing
403-518-5858
www.imagineitinwriting.com

Darlene Poier, Publisher
Pages Of Stories
403-831-8264
www.pagesofstories.com

The Morning After

By Fiona Law

Fiona lives just outside London in a tiny house where you may find her penning stories in a nook beneath the stairs. She mostly writes fantasy and historical woman's fiction but also contemporary short stories and some children's fiction. Her compassionate interest in people, her fascination with Britain's rich and colourful heritage, and her endearment to its picturesque landscape are reflected in her writing. For experts and links to her published work, visit www.fionalaw.webs.com.

*D*reams dance and jangle to pulsing bursts of noise, they bend and warp into the glare of morning sunlight on closed eyes. Nausea creeps in, sliding sleep aside. And a headache sits on Jean's head like a demon, its claws pressing in ... tightening. She peeps through the slits of her leaden eyelids and opens her mouth. A dry rasp is all she can muster. She groans and turns, through throbs and waves of ache and nausea she remembers.

Jean, having been trumped yet again by her prettier cousin, stood in the sun lounge of Pembleton Halls – Historical Manor House, now open to the public to hire for functions – and watched the other guests mingling in their designer eveningwear as they celebrated their engagement.

"I made mine from a Simplicity pattern," she said to Dean, her so-called date, and sighed. At the time, making it, she'd felt enthused, compatible.

All that quickly dissipated when in greeting, Auntie said, "How decent of you Jean dear, not to attempt to upstage the bride-to-be on this, her engagement to the thirty-sixth in line to the throne. Would you and your beaux

like to take in the delights of the sun lounge?"

And with that Auntie had deftly guided Jean and her 'beaux' away from the more important guests. Auntie continued on, "I'm so glad you found someone to be your guest and you didn't have to come alone. Do enjoy yourselves and don't worry about the cost of the drinks as they are on the groom-to-be!" Auntie quickly turned back to those other guests, visibly glad to have got Jean out of sight.

"Did she say he was the thirty-sixth in line or the sixty-third?" asked Dean who was from work – from Promotions. He looked around, and muttered "Not that it matters, when they're that far down. Very ostentatious affair, this!"

Jean smiled; see that's why she'd invited Dean, he knew how to bite back. He allowed her to get her claws out. "Ostentatious to the point of kitsch!" she agreed.

"Just like that vulgar invitation she sent you! Pixies getting married in a magical garden – I ask you!"

"Oh, Dean! They're the faerie prince and princess!"

In the lull after their laughter, Jean self-consciously tweaked her little black dress.

"Darling, don't pick at it!" Dean said, "It's simply gorgeous! Now stand up straight and own that dupioni silk, darling, seethe in it. You are the queen of this... shrubbery."

Jean laughed, but she straightened her spine and pulled her shoulders back, poising between the Jurassic leaves of tropical plants, potted in Grecian urns and scattered amongst chairs and round tables trimmed with gilt brookie lace.

Turning to Dean, she said, "How can the wedding top this?"

Dean tossed his lank fringe. "I shudder to think!" His eyes roved the milling guests, quickly looking talent up

and down with snappy little glances.

"Still, as your Auntie so kindly pointed out, we've plenty of free drinks!"

Jean swigged her wine, "My little cousin's in a gown. She looks like she's here to pick up an Oscar."

Dean threw his head back and laughed. "Positively OTT!"

Jean nodded, swallowed down the last of her wine and said, "Auntie Margaret is so self satisfied I almost wish Dave would turn out to be gay, or broke, or something. Anything to have it all come crashing down."

"You cow! Let me get you another drink."

Oh dear. I sense some regret happening. Find out all that Jean did to cause regret.

The rest of this story is available July 15.

Crossing Point

By Lynn Cain

Lynn Cain lives in North-East England. She has been a fashion model, a marketing executive and an academic. She has a PhD from Newcastle University and her doctoral thesis formed the basis of Dickens, Family, Authorship: psychological perspectives on kinship and creativity which was published by Ashgate in 2008. Although Lynn is a former editor of a literary magazine, she has only recently begun writing fiction herself. She has previously been published in Issue #2 of this magazine with her story 'Waiting for the Kingfisher'.

"*N*o home to go to, Belford? Let me guess, you're just answering one last email, right?"

Dry-eyed from staring at the computer screen, Clarissa squinted towards her office door in Newcastle's Swann Gallery. "Edna, I thought you'd left. How did the Hockney lecture go?" She removed her spectacles and drank some water then stretched back in her seat, hands clasped behind her head.

"They all stayed awake except Mrs. Atherton, and I woke her by dropping a heavy book on the floor. She thought she was back in the Blitz." "You brute."

"I'm a Yank, honey, it's practically obligatory. Hey, I like these old dames, I just don't want them snoring while I'm talking." She sauntered towards the desk. "What's up? Sister-in-law still dug in?"

Clarissa raked her fingers through her auburn urchin cut. "It's been two months."

"Jeez."

"I know I should pity the poor woman losing her father after caring for him all those years but..."

"Poor woman baloney. She's moving in on your husband. Don't let

her. The man's yours; he married you not her. No one did. Ugly bitch, yeah?"

Despite herself, Clarissa laughed. "Not ugly, big. Enormous. I have to squeeze round her."

"She's edging you out, hon. Be firm. Give her a hard time. She'll get the message."

"I can't Edna. I'd feel guilty."

"Hey, you're a wife not a saint." Edna checked her watch. "Shit, I'm out of here. See you next month." She paused. "You too, hon. Get your ass home now."

The stench enveloped Clarissa as soon as she opened the front-door, infiltrating her hair, invading her lungs. Roast pork. Everyone knew her house was a meat-free zone. Even Philip, a fervent carnivore, only ate meat when they dined out.

He was in the kitchen, hunkered down behind his newspaper. "Florence has cooked dinner," he said, peering over the top.

The woman was wearing Philip's apron. It was emblazoned with Hamlet's plea: "O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt". If only.

"But I enjoy cooking after work, Florence. I find it relaxing." Clarissa aimed at cheeriness and missed by a mile.

"Yes dear, but I must do my bit while I'm here. Don't worry, I've done you a nice salad. I know you need to watch your weight."

"I don't *need* to, I *choose* to."

Others might follow my example." A loaded glance ricocheted off Philip's *Guardian*.

"Leave him alone, he needs feeding up." The newspaper crackled. "There." Florence presented for her admiration a plate bearing two limp lettuce leaves, an arc of sliced cucumber, a clutch of tomato wedges and a hillock of grated orange

Cheddar. Clarissa wanted to say "No way am I eating that. Oh, and while we're about it, no meat in my house." Instead she poured a hefty glass of Rioja and went upstairs to change.

Florence's whisper cruised after her. "It's none of my business, Phil, but do you think Clarissa is alcohol dependent?" Any day now.

The bathtub was a steep-sided, roll-topped affair in which she and Philip had candle-lit baths together, sipping champagne while Ella sang the blues. It had remained unused since Florence's arrival. Tonight, however, a faint grey scum sullied the white enamel. Surely Florence wouldn't have sneaked in here while they were out at work and used their bath? Sat in it and sloughed off her dead skin with Clarissa's loofah - yes, it was still wet - and left behind a smear of scurf? Clarissa's gorge rose: get a grip, it's only a bath.

Ugh! That's just disgusting. Find out all the bizarre things Florence does during her stay at Clarissa's house.

It's in the issue coming out on July 15th.

Untenable

Part II

By Leigh Lundin

Leigh Lundin writes for Ellery Queen and Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazines, as well as the short story blog, Criminal Brief. When a series of hurricanes ravaged Orlando, and left him without power, water, and phones, he began writing professionally. Two years later, Leigh won the Readers Choice Award, the first time a first-time writer took first place in its sixty year history. Leigh is pleased to bring us our first serial, the first installment of this clever locked-room mystery can be found in the Spring 2011 issue of Pages Of Stories.

Previously in this locked room mystery:

Jealousy estranged Demetrius Tantalous from his successful family. Thus, the blue collar transit mechanic is stunned when he inherits the use of his wealthy brother's estate with the caveat that it remain entailed and intact until his death, when his brother's children, Curtis, Leo, and Nina will inherit. That might seem a formula for murder, but Demetrius is in ill health and all three are wealthy in their own right. They offer to help Demetrius with advice, shopping, and taxes, but he rudely rebuffs them, choosing to focus on gambling and the ponies.

Demetrius receives a series of increasingly threatening eMails predicting he'll die at 10:10 on 10/10/10. Defiant, he locks himself in his brother's hi-tech safe room, messaging the outside world from time to time.

His last message cried out for help, stating he was under attack.

The time read 10:10:10.

On Sunday, while his wife knelt in church, Detective Dawes communed his own way, golf on an Indian summer morning. Ahead of par, he cursed when his cell phone vibrated during a swing and he chipped the ball into the rough.

"What?" he snapped into the phone. He listened, growing incensed as a frisson of fear traced his neck. On his own initiative, he'd stationed a patrol car outside the Gramercy Park townhouse. Now, as he listened to a dispatch operator, he gathered Demetrius Tantalous couldn't be reached.

Growling surly, he tossed his golf bag in the trunk of his car and headed west on the Long Island Expressway. Dawes hoped efforts weren't in vain. He couldn't think of more to protect Tantalous short of locking him in a cell which, he reflected, was about what they'd done.

Manhattan's streets remained clear, although parking around Gramercy presented the usual problems. Dawes cast a frown at an unticketed SUV double-parked within kissing distance of the surveillance unit he'd assigned. Once parked, he ambled over to the patrol car.

"What's with the SUV?"

"It's his niece, said she wanted to run upstairs and check on her uncle. Minutes later, she runs back saying he's locked in his safe room and not responding. Probably dozing but who knows? Anyway, we knocked on the door and got no response. We called it in and waited for you."

As Dawes passed the passenger door of the SUV, he mentally noted the magnetic placard, *Cultured Cuisine and Catering*. He jogged up the steps and rang the bell.

A minute and a half later, a man wearing a black suit jacket and a practiced expressionless face opened the door. "Whom may I say is calling, sir?"

"Detective Dawes, but don't bother announcing. Is Miss Tantalous upstairs?"

"Indeed, sir."

Dawes jogged up three flights of stairs and paused, glad of a moment to catch his breath before reaching the study. The safe room door remained defiantly shut.

Warning! Reading the rest of this story will cause you to need to read part 1 (found in the Spring 2011 issue).

The rest of this fantastic locked-room mystery can be found in the Summer 2011 issue due out on July 15th.

The Last Pixel Show

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. This is the second story we've published of Graham's.

"Half Moon Street, Half Moon Street."

Bruce Conover stared fixedly at the words emblazoned upon the otherwise blank computer screen.

"I've tried everything, but it's still there." He shook his head. "Some kind of cryptic message – or a sensor ghost, spirited up by that bloody supernova."

Conover paced the diploma-lined living room of his apartment in ever-decreasing circles. There were hints of both strength and weakness in his tall, lean-muscled frame, as with his pale blue eyes. The room was well-enough furnished, but it lacked any real style or character, unless one counted the vintage Marantz stereo music centre. He finally stopped to glare once more at the mocking display terminal.

It was at that moment the front doorbell chimed out *Shave and a haircut, two bits*. But Conover, lost in thought, paid it no attention.

"The same three words ..."

There was a light patter of footsteps from the hallway. The living room door swung creakily open and a

slender twenty-something woman with short dark-brown hair crossed the threshold. She smiled a sad-glad smile before gliding her way towards the still-rapt Conover.

"Half Moon Street," Conover kept mumbling. "Half Moon –"

The woman leaned over his left shoulder and spoke into his ear, "Street!"

Conover spun around and the woman stepped back, just in time to avoid a clash of heads.

"Penelope Blackburn!"

"Bruce Conover!"

"It's just that I wasn't expecting you, Penny," Conover said, breathlessly. "And I don't remember leaving the front door open." His mouth twitched into a smile. "Not that it matters to me, you understand. But there is such a thing as ... security."

"You know very well that I *am* security. And I *laugh* at locked doors." Penny took up an arms-akimbo stance, which emphasized her wide-set but ample-enough breasts. "Ha. Ha! Ha!"

"Did your boss send you to check up on me?" Conover adopted what he believed to be a 'posh' accent: "Sir James Lackland, KCB. The CEO of Cosmic Developments, Ltd. And something-or-other in the British Secret Service."

Must be some computer bug if the British Secret Service is involved!

Find out what's going on in the Summer 2011 issue due out on July 15th.

Getting to Know...



An interview with author Donna Dawson

Recently, Pages Of Stories did an email interview with this woman of many talents. Read more about this impressive individual.

Pages: Would you like to tell us about where you live and your family?

DD: I live near London Ontario on a lovely rolling farm. I am married with three daughters, two sons-in-law and almost seven grandbabies. I drive a motor cycle, ride horses, like to run in spite of my weight;) and enjoy gardening.

Pages: Can you tell us a little bit about when and maybe even why you started writing?

DD: I have always liked story telling but the real first nudge in the direction of writing came from my high school English teacher. She had told me that if I did nothing else I should write. It was after getting an A+ on a play I had written. It was a mystery. I continued to read a lot but didn't really start writing professionally until my children were entering their teens. I enjoyed the freelance magazine market and spent ten years working casually in that market before writing my first book. It was a non-fiction 'how-to' for home teaching. Since then, I have added five novels to that collection as well as a few anthologies. I still enjoy writing short stories and articles and will often jockey between book manuscripts and articles or story manuscripts.

Pages: Based on your website (www.authordonnasawson.com), you are a multi-talented artist; including both writing and singing in your

repertoire. Of those two, which is your first love?

DD: It's a hard choice. Both are very much part of what makes me--me. I have been singing solos since I was four years old so that is second nature to me. I've been writing songs since I was 16 so the two skills are intertwined. I've spent years without writing and I've spent years without singing. Both times were challenging to me. I think I love them both the same. Sorry if that was a cop-out:)

Pages: I believe you also teach at a college? What are some of the lessons that you pass on to your students.

DD: I do still teach creative writing for adult students at Fanshawe College in London. Probably the most important lesson that writers need to know is that there is an emotional element in making a writer good at what they do. In order to transfer heart-stopping fear or deep and abiding love onto paper one must feel it deeper than the average person. Writers are given the gift to write but they are also given the gift to feel deeply in order to write with flair. It often makes us over-sensitive people which is why we shun editing. I like writers to recognize that the heightened sensitivity is part of their gift but must be kept in its place and in perspective.

Pages: While the stories you've submitted to Pages Of Stories have all been "whodunits", you cover a wide array of topics in your writing. How do you come up with some of your ideas? Where does the inspiration for them lie?

DD: I have one of those minds that seldom shuts down. At night it isn't much fun:) but during the day so many ideas bombard me from so many different sources. I can see a caption in a newspaper and have an idea for a story. Sometimes a social issue will become a hot topic and the problem solving part of me tries to resolve that issue in a story. This was the case with my novel Rescued. 20 years ago I read an article about embryo transfer in horses and wondered why it couldn't be done in people. For the next 15 years I mulled that over, talked with doctors and specialists and came up with a scenario where an embryo had to be transferred in order to save the mother's life. When I am dealing with faith-based writing the inspiration usually focuses around problems and how faith can help us journey through them. Many of the ideas just show up.

Pages: You sing (many different genres of music), you write (many different genres of fiction), you live in rural Ontario, you have a family; when do you find time to be Donna?

DD: Lol! That's the fun part! That is Donna. I keep everything in its season. I worked on being a wife, then a mother, then a home teaching mom, then a writer, then a singer. I also spent 10 years as a professional kilt maker, a wedding gown seamstress and while we have had horses, I have spent 20 years doing horse shoeing when needed. It helps that I'm a wee bit high energy, that I like to learn new things, and that my parents taught me that the word 'can't' should never have been invented.

With Friends Like This

By Donna Fawcett

Donna Fawcett (Donna Dawson) is the creative writing instructor for Fanshawe College in London, Ontario. Her writings cover many genres and markets from romance to suspense and from short story to creative non-fiction. Donna's suspense novel Vengeance won two national awards in the 2009 The Word Guild awards. 2011 has seen the release of her fifth novel entitled Rescued and her CD of songs entitled 'Searching for the Son'. Donna speaks at writing conferences and motivational events. Donna was published in our Spring 2011 issue with her story 'All In the Family'. For more on Donna visit www.donnafawcett.com

I don't know why the hackles on my neck rose when I first met him. He seemed like a nice enough guy. Retired university professor. Soft spoken. Wore the stereotypical sleeveless sweater over a plaid shirt. Even his name was unassuming. James Sikes. But there was something that gnawed down deep in the farthest corners of my mind. Something just wasn't right about him. My problem was that while my inner detective senses were seldom wrong, I often had a tough time finding the proof to go with those inklings.

I kept my stare narrow and my face dead pan as I asked the pertinent questions.

"Why don't we start at the beginning? How long have you known the victim?"

Mr. Sikes sucked in a soft breath. "My wife and I moved next door only two years ago. I don't really know him that well. We'll have—we did have—an occasional nip of whiskey across the fence. My wife would bring out a couple glasses and a bottle of my best whenever she saw us chatting. He was a pretty secretive guy. We never really

talked about anything more than the weather. He seemed nice enough."

The man worked hard at matching his non-committal expression to mine. He was good—but not as good as me. I dropped my gaze to my notes—notes that I had taken after viewing the body at the morgue—notes that I had taken after talking to the victim's doctor.

"The victim's doctor mentioned that he suffered from pain and tingling in the arms, headaches and abdominal pain. Did he ever mention it to you?"

He nodded. "Once in awhile his face would contort as though he were in pain. I asked him about it. He always shrugged and asked for an extra shot. He'd toss it back pretty quick. I once suggested he hold back on the drink—that it might be part of the problem. I learned not to do that again. He had a bit of a disconcerting glare that made it plain I shouldn't go there. And then he'd shift moods rather quickly and talk about his job or the gardens. I let it go. Look detective, I'm not sure where all this is leading but I thought it was cancer or something like that. Are you telling me it isn't?"

If it's not cancer and the police are involved, that can only mean 1 thing.

Read the rest of this story in our Summer 2011 issue due out on July 15th.

Following Allan

By Allison Heward

Allison lives in a market town in Shropshire, England. She's been writing since infant school and has had stories published in various magazines. Currently, she has a "proper" job but previously she's written quiz questions for TV and clues for a crossword website. She's been a mystery shopper, a film extra and taught French. Allison loves languages, acting on the amateur stage, travel and, of course, writing.

"Let's go this way," he said. "It's a short cut." Doubtfully I eyed the bank of scree plunging away beneath our feet. Not so much a path as a bungee jump, I thought. Only no elastic.

"Are you sure, Alan?" I'd been trying to keep the wail out of my voice all day and until now I'd almost succeeded. Despite tramping half way across the Lake District with only a banana and a handful of peanuts to keep me going. Having an Action Man boyfriend can sometimes be a bit of a strain.

My words limped after him as he bounded ahead, sending a landslide of loose rocks and stones tumbling down the steep incline.

For a moment I faltered, considered turning back alone, but I didn't hesitate long. After all, as Alan loves to joke, "Julie, your sense of direction wouldn't get you out of a cul-de-sac." And he could be right. That's why he always takes charge of the map, just to be on the safe side.

Not that I'm the one who drove us from Manchester to Liverpool via Leeds last Christmas. I won't accept the blame for that, oh no. Actually, it's a journey Alan doesn't really like to remember. Bless him!

With a bit of a wobble I followed Alan over the edge of the precipice. I'd developed an alarming tendency to teeter, thrown off balance by my heavy rucksack. Apparently it was physically impossible that the straps could be digging cruelly into my shoulders "due to the rucksack's unique design and top quality fabrication". So I had to curse under my breath.

Placing every footstep gingerly, I progressed. Then his voice rang out, some distance below. "Get a move on, Julie. We're running late."

"Does it matter?" I grumbled. Once again a gentle ramble had turned into a route march. What a hobby! I must admit, my idea of leisure is better suited by a box of Belgian chocolates and several semi-comatose hours in front of the telly.

"We've got to get to the campsite before dark," Alan continued to bellow. "We'll be pitching the tent by torchlight at this rate."

"I'll help." I assured him, then looked up, startled by the sound of his echoing laughter.

Taking my eyes off my feet was the fatal mistake. I shouldn't complain - I escaped with all my bones intact. If only the same could be said of the last vestiges of my dignity and the seat of my jeans, on which I completed the descent.

"Julie!" He was at my side instantly, stooping to help as I writhed on the ground like an overturned turtle. "Thank goodness," I heard him breathe as I struggled to my feet, sobbing - more with frustration than pain. "There's hardly a mark on it."

"On what?" I asked, dusting off the damaged region of my anatomy.

"The rucksack, of course. It cost a fortune. You promised to be more careful with equipment after the incident with the windsurfing board."

"Is that all you care about?" I snivelled. Sometimes I think Alan forgets I was on that board as it was swept out to sea. And if it hadn't been for a passing fishing boat I too might never have been seen again.

Wow, he seems like a catch. Find out what happens on this memorable camping trip on July 15th.

Return to Teal Marsh

By Gordon Arnold

Winnipeg writer Gordon Arnold recently retired after 45 years of working for daily and weekly newspapers across western Canada. Most of that time was at the Winnipeg Free Press, from which he retired as senior copy editor and web editor. 'Return to Teal Marsh' is an excerpt from his as-yet-unpublished novel 'Skippy's War'. Gordon is a regular contributor to Pages Of Stories. You can read his other stories in the previous issues.

This wasn't how Jordi Duncan dreamed of coming home when he ran off at 14 to fight in the Great War. Everyone would be standing on the station platform cheering as he swung down off the train in a fresh army uniform so crisp it could stand at attention on its own. There would be oohs and ahs as the crowd stared at the rows of medals on his chest. A marching band would be parading up and down the platform. The mayor would be there, of course, with a welcoming speech. All the girls would be giggling to themselves and swooning over him.

Instead, about a half hour out of Teal Marsh, the conductor had to give Jordi a vigorous shake in his seat in the coach car. Jordi struggled awake, and peered out the window. It was still dark, and he ached all over. At least the fever was gone for now.

The fever first hit Jordi on the troop ship a couple of days before it docked in Halifax. A lot of soldiers had been sick during the crossing from England, too weak to even leave their bunks. It was a rough crossing even by the standards of the North Atlantic in February.

By the time he boarded the train in the Halifax station, Jordi felt he was burning like a still-glowing plough

shear that Gaston DeRoo had just pulled from his blacksmith's forge. When the fever would let up for a few hours, the hurt was even worse. The only hurt Jordi could remember that even came close was the day the Conns' young stallion pitched him off onto the stone pile. Except now, a whole herd of wild horses was trampling him while he lay helpless on top of the stone pile.

How long had he been on the train? A couple of days, a couple of weeks, his whole lifetime. Jordi shook his head, trying to remember. Most of Canada had passed by in a string of feverish, achy hallucinations of fiery blacksmith forges and trampling horses. He couldn't make his brain tell him how long he'd been on the train.

Jordi had changed trains, he thought. Was it in Montreal? He wasn't sure any more. Not many people spoke English in the station, so it must have been. Then he'd changed again, Toronto, maybe. Someone had looked at his ticket and propelled him through the station and put him in the coach heading west. He'd changed trains for the final time in Winnipeg, or was it Fort William? He didn't know. It didn't matter. He would be home soon.

Just as the train lurched to a halt, the wheels shrieking against the rails, Jordi stood up. With some difficulty he struggled into his great coat, which he had been using as a blanket in the drafty coach. His disheveled uniform smelled of days of train travel. His shirt was frayed at the collar, pants ripped at the knee, and his jacket was held together by safety pins where shiny buttons should have been. He didn't care. He hadn't shaved since sometime back on the ship. He didn't care about that either. When he left home in 1915, he had nothing to shave.

It seems it wasn't enough of a hardship just surviving the war for poor Jordi Duncan.

Find out what other hardships await him on July 15th.

The Visit

By Rebecca Mansell

Rebecca wrote a novel when she was only 10 years old and always read at least one book a day. Her passion for writing resulted in articles, letters and poems published in magazines and newspapers and now she writes for a glossy magazine in Plymouth as well as creating educational resources for colleges. She is a teacher of psychology and law and loves to relax with her fiancé, their two springer spaniels and three teenagers in rural Tavistock, Devon.

“It’s been a beautiful day, hasn’t it? Not a cloud in the sky. Poor Kitty had to come to the vets. I think she’s trodden on something. She keeps limping.”

Julia nodded politely at the old lady sat beside her, who had a rather fat tabby cat on her lap, and stifled a yawn. She could think of better things to do on a Saturday evening than sitting in her local vets. The smell of damp, matted fur made her nose wrinkle and she was sure the man opposite had a snake in his large and rather long holey container. She shuddered involuntarily. Her neighbour’s feline friend was mewling piteously and gazing at her with green, sorrowful eyes. She obviously didn’t want to be there either and Julia felt sorry for her.

She looked down at Rusty, her golden Labrador. Fortunately, he was unperturbed by the presence of the nearby cat. He was used to his regular visits to the vets and took them in his complacent stride.

“He’s rather nice, isn’t he?”

The old lady smiled at Julia knowingly and she realised she meant the rather attractive vet who had just entered the waiting room, not her now sleeping canine companion.

“Er, yes, I suppose he is,” Julia replied, trying to be non-committal.

The old woman nudged her, “Don’t believe he has a girl-friend. You like him, don’t you? I can tell these things, you know,” her heavy bosom heaved as she chuckled. “You young people. So backward in coming forward. Now, in my day...”

“Miss Williams?”

The vet’s deep voice made Julia jump and she anxiously tugged Rusty’s lead, if only to escape the old woman’s knowing look.

“Would you like to come this way?” the vet asked smiling as he glanced around the packed waiting room.

Julia walked Rusty into the familiar back room. It looked like it once used to be a kitchen. Attractive floral curtains adorned the windows and a kettle was boiling merrily next to a tea set on the worktop.

The handsome vet gazed at her appraisingly and she felt her cheeks becoming warm.

“What’s the problem this time?” he raised his eyebrows.

She swallowed nervously. She had been to the vets rather a lot lately. What with Flopsy her rabbit and his ear that refused to stand straight, Hamble’s problem with her very long hamster teeth and Rusty’s numerous ailments, Julia was a frequent visitor.

Poor Rusty! There must be a very good reason why Julia’s had him at the vets so often.

It’s not what you think. Read the real reason when the rest of the story comes out on July 15th.

Emily's Ghost Story

By Fran Rizer

Retired public school teacher Fran Rizer was published in numerous magazines prior to her four novels in the Callie Parrish Mystery series. Fran is also known for her clever quips and sharp one-liners on the Criminal Brief. For more about Fran and her writing, see www.franrizer.com.

I sit silently as Drew drives our red Porsche along the rutted dirt road. It's been three days since he spoke to me this time. Seventy-two hours of quiet. An eternity of longing to hear him say my name -- "Emily." I hated that word until I met Drew. The people in South Carolina's low country drop the "i," and it comes out Emm-lee.

The first time I ever saw Drew, I'd gone to put flowers on Grandma's grave. He was in the Beaufort churchyard sketching moss-covered trees and magnolias. I stood behind him and watched as he created a whole world out of just a few pencil strokes. After several moments, he turned and looked at me with unwavering blue eyes. The man took my breath.

"Who are you?" he asked.

Sometimes I'm flippant, downright sarcastic. Got an attitude. It's a wonder I didn't answer, "What's it to you?" Instead I replied, "I'm Emily."

"Emily as in Emily Dickinson?" he asked, and I laughed with pure pleasure. He'd pronounced my name with three delicate syllables. It sounded positively delicious when Drew said it.

"Yes," I answered, "but I don't make up poetry. I try to write stories."

"Why try? Why don't you just write them?"

"I don't know. I guess I'm not too good at it yet."

"You can be if you want to be," Drew said, and I believed him.

That's how it began. Before long, we were spending most of our time together. Lots of days sitting side by side in churchyards or marshes. Me writing my little tales on a yellow legal pad while Drew sketched or painted.

"What are you writing?" Drew asked.

"A story to send to a magazine. I need to see my words in print. I want people to read what I write."

"Where did you get the idea?"

"I made it up. It's about a boy and girl falling in love and seeing a ghost."

"Oh," Drew said and went back to drawing.

When it rained hard and we couldn't sit outside, we escaped into Drew's battered old van. He kept a collection of Andrew Wyeth prints there. During bad weather and at night, Drew showed them to me.

"I want to paint like Wyeth!" he exclaimed. His eyes lit up like he was on fire inside. "When Wyeth paints fog and wind, you can feel them! Just look at this print. It's called 'Sea Fog.' You can see the mist beginning to drift, to wisp away. You can feel the breeze tease your shirt in 'Wind from the Sea.' That's how I'm going to paint!"

I didn't have any books of my own, just the ones I checked out from the library. I'd hold up my favorite collections of short stories -- 'Skeleton Crew' by Stephen King or one of Edgar Allen Poe's and say, "Someday I'm going to write like this -- mysteries and about ghosts and spooky things."

"But, Emily, you've never been through any of that. Write about the life you've lived, people like the ones you know."

I tossed my head to swing my hair back. "Don't tell me what to do!" I

snapped at him. Drew turned away from me and looked at his Wyeth prints again. He loved them all, but his favorite painting was "Christina's World." Everyone's seen the picture of a young woman in a field of grass looking up toward a clapboard house and barn on top of a knoll. The girl's wearing a pink dress, and her position looks strange. It's as though she's crawling, but her body seems twisted.

I can tell you that Emily does finally get the experience with ghosts that she's looking for. There's a twist though.

Find out what it is on July 15th.

Travels With My Uncle

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. This is the fourth time that Michael has been published in this magazine. You can find all his stories in previous issues of Pages Of Stories.

It was a sad old day, the day they buried Arthur Johnson: leaden skies, a chill wind and cold rain that spattered his coffin loud enough to wake the dead. Well...almost. There were just six of us at the graveside, not counting the vicar who gabbled his words like a man on speed trying to get it over and done with as soon as possible. Kate was there; my father; two ladies of a certain age dabbling tears from their once-pretty cheeks, and a vaguely familiar old guy whose battered suit matched his battered face. And then there was me – the only person who really gave a damn that my uncle's card playing days were over.

"I told you it was a mistake, Michael; ordering all this food."

I nodded. Kate was right. But then; my big sister was always right. There was enough food in the Red Lion to keep a small army happy, let alone the handful gathered in the bar. Mother was there, of course, with a few of her strait-laced friends, sipping a sweet sherry and doubtless tut-tutting about her recently departed brother-in-law. 'The coven' he used to call them; not without good reason. Four or five local youths had latched on to the free food-fest and were unashamedly shovelling pork pies down their throats as if there was no tomorrow. And, apart from the graveside mourners, that was the sum total of people paying their 'respects' to

my uncle. Even the vicar had given the reception a miss.

"I wanted him to have a good send-off, Kate," I said. "I remember when we were kids he loved a party. Any excuse for a good booze-up and he was there."

"That was then Michael; this is now. You can't cut people from your life and expect them to grieve when you've gone."

"But he was dying and in pain, Kate. No wonder he got a bit grumpy at times," I said; without much conviction in my voice.

"He'd been dying inside for years. The original miserable old sod – that's what he became."

"Well, he always seemed cheerful enough to me," I protested.

"Of course he did. You were his blue-eyed boy. He always put on a show for you. On the rare occasions you came to visit, that is."

I winced at her words. It was true I hadn't been down from London as often as I'd have liked in the last two years, but I knew he understood. And she was right again with her blue-eyed boy dig. What she avoided saying was that he took to me because, for a period of my life, I'd been the second black sheep of the Johnson family.

"Damn it," I said, angrily, "It's his bloody funeral and no-one's got a good word to say for him."

"That ain't quite true ... I have." I turned to see the old guy from the graveside. "I don't suppose you remember me, Mike," he said.

"I'm sorry," I replied, "but I can't say I do."

"That's okay son. Why would you remember me? You was just a kid, back then, when I used to play cards with Arthur and a few of the boys; often in the back room of this very pub."

"Ah yes, my uncle always liked a game of cards," I nodded.

"That's right," he said, "good poker player, he was. Kept his cards close to his chest; if you know what I mean."

"You knew him for a long time, then?"

"Most of my life. We grew up together and spent a lot of time together, one way or another," he said with a knowing smile. "And I tell you this Mike; he thought the world of you, Arthur did. Always on about his successful nephew, he was."

"Thanks," I said, "It's good of you to say so."

"No need for thanks. It's true. And, listen Mike," he said, drawing me closer in a conspiratorial manner, "don't let anyone ever bad mouth him. He might have been a bit of a rogue when he was young, but a real diamond geezer was Arthur."

If only we all had uncle's like Mike did.

Find out why on July 15th.

Food for Thought

By Helen Finch

Helen has written and had published numerous short stories both in the UK and abroad. She has also had a local history book published in the UK along with a walks book for children, entitled "Kiddiwalks in London" by Countryside Books (2010).

She writes fiction for children and adults as well as articles. Helen is a working mum (evening secretary) of two boys and keeps busy by helping out at the schools with reading and writing; attending regular athletic training with the children and exploring her family history.

Maggie sat at the weathered wooden table, admiring the way the January sunlight glistened on the lake's blue-black surface like a scattering of tiny diamonds on velvet. Every day she and Bill would stop here on their way to the quaint little shops that lined the shore. When the weather was fine, like today, he would bring his paints and she her writing pad and they would sit outside the café together relaxing in the sun. It became routine that Bill would order a warm scone and butter, with jam and a mug of tea, while her favourite indulgence was a slice of apple tart and a cappuccino. It reminded her of their honeymoon in Sorrento fifteen years before.

A smile softened Maggie's face as she remembered the times she had sat at this very table, looking at a blank page. Writer's block they called it. She called it 'no imagination'. She'd borrowed all the 'How to' books from the local library and not one had inspired her. Maggie had often suggested to Bill that he should take time out from his painting and write about his life. Now that was interesting.

From small beginnings and a life in the navy, to world traveller and

volunteer, it seemed he'd been everywhere and done everything. He was also kind and caring and that's what people liked about him. Bill had many a time told her about his African adventure. Hoping that when they retired they would have enough money saved to take a trip back, as well as spending some time travelling the length and breadth of the country.

It was Bill who had seen the advert for the local writers' circle and suggested that Maggie join. Something to keep her amused while he was at his painting class, he said. So Maggie went along. Everyone was pleasant, making her feel welcome, but everyone else was published and she'd felt completely out of her depth. As always, Bill was upbeat about it.

"It'll happen one day, you'll see," he would say, when she told him she couldn't think of a word to write. It was also his suggestion that the picturesque waterside café was a good place to work, to help them unwind and allow inspiration to strike. It certainly worked for him. He produced the most beautiful paintings of local life. And he looked so relaxed and well.

Which was why it had come as such a shock when he collapsed that Saturday at his art class. Despite Maggie's frantic rush to the hospital, she'd arrived with barely time to say a last 'farewell' to the man she loved before he'd slipped from her reach. The doctor told her later that he'd had a weak heart and that he'd been lucky to make it past forty. It seemed an odd sort of way to console someone.

It's never easy to just get on with your life after the death of a spouse.

Find out how Maggie got through this on July 15th.

Crying Wolf

By Judy Upton

Judy works full-time as a professional playwright and screenwriter. She has had her stories published in a UK based magazine. You can find out more about Judy by going to her website, www.judyupton.co.uk.

Once Daniel had recovered from initial shock of the accident, he was angered rather than frightened by the realization that he was trapped. He cursed his own stupidity and clumsiness. Apart from the dull ache where the Jeep's axle was resting upon his shoulders, there was no pain. He could not lift his head at all, restricting his view to the underside of the vehicle and a narrow strip of the forest floor beyond. His limbs remained free, yet he dared not attempt to drag himself from under the jeep for fear of bring its full weight down upon his neck. Only the soft, springy layer of leaf litter and the unevenness of the ground had saved him from serious injury.

For the first time he was thankful the work was behind schedule. By rights, this last area of woodland on the site should have already been cleared in preparation for the building of a golf course and helicopter landing pad. Had the car jack collapsed on denuded, flattened soil he would not have stood a chance of survival.

As it was, he would have plenty of time in which to count his blessings before the construction team returned in the morning and freed him. Alternatively someone from the village might just pass by close enough to hear a cry for help. Very likely though, Daniel thought darkly, if they realized who it was in need of assistance, they would leave him to the forest and the night.

Earlier that same evening he had been forced to make a hasty exit via the back door of a packed village tavern. The public meeting had failed to convince the locals of the merits of having Rome's new country club as their neighbour. With a wry smile he recalled the jostling crowd of ruddy faces all shouting at him at once. Then with a slight start and a shiver he remembered the wolf.

The image in Daniel's mind was not of the wolf itself but of the girl, tall and bespectacled, who had pleaded on the animal's behalf. Crushed by the mob and rendered inarticulate by her nervousness, all she had managed to stammer was "What's going to happen to the wolf?" Shuffling and impatient muttering from those around her had assured him that no one else was the least bit interested in the fate of a single, aged creature, the last of its kind in the area. Never-the-less Daniel had played to his audience, telling the girl that they could not be having the country club's rich patrons coming face to face with a wolf at the 18th hole. A little humour always eased the tension. The girl however had seemed reluctant to show him her smile. Instead he had treated her to one of his own most indulgent ones, whilst letting her know how terribly sorry he was that the wolf must be removed – a smooth, trouble-free euphemism for "shot".

It seems that this a perfect example of "what goes around, comes around".

Find out how, or if, Daniel gets out of this awkward situation on July 15th.

Turtle Bay

By John M. Floyd

John Floyd hails from Brandon, Mississippi and his work has appeared in more than 200 different publications including; 'Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine', and 'Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine'. A 2007 Derringer Award winner, John is the author of three collections of short fiction: 'Rainbow's End' (2006), 'Midnight' (2008), and 'Clockwork' (2010). John's story 'Weekend Getaway' was featured in Issue #2 of Pages Of Stories.

*"Y*our luck," Madame Zelda said, "is about to change."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

She looked up from her study of my open palm and raised an eyebrow. "I mean it'll be different from what it was before."

"But will it change for the better or for the worse?"

"I'd go with better, wouldn't you? People who already have good luck aren't the ones who come to see me." She released my hand, checked her watch, and gave me a bored look. "That'll be thirty dollars."

The truth is, Madame Zelda (who I suspected had some job-satisfaction issues) was right on at least one count. My recent luck smelled like a pig wallow on a summer day.

My misfortunes fell into two categories: my marriage and my career. Victoria had been my wife for five years, and the last four had been miserable. The problem, of course, was me. I was fond of booze and other women, and Vicky was opposed to both. The really sad thing is, I married her for her money, and even that part of it hadn't worked out. Her father, J. Malcolm Leach of JML Investments, was loaded all right, but was as stingy as Scrooge's accountant, and although Vicky was listed as the sole beneficiary

in his will, Malcolm was still relatively young and relatively healthy. He'd probably outlive me by twenty years.

My professional future was even gloomier. The construction firm I worked for - like most employers these days - had been forced to cut back on everything, including the number of employees. There was a good chance I'd be out of a job by Christmas, and the leaves were already falling. So was my outlook on life in general.

How could my luck *not* improve?

Well, it did, actually, and it happened on the very next day after my session with Zelda the Sarcastic Fortuneteller. My supervisor, Carl Peterson, called me into his office, sat down on the corner of his paper-littered desk, and said, "A life preserver has been thrown our way."

"Did we pick up a zillion-dollar contract?"

"Better'n that. We're being bought."

I blinked. "Bought?"

A smile spread across his face.

"We're about to merge with an outfit in Birmingham. Their head fred, a veteran named Oscar Woscialski, was impressed with that job we did on the Ellsworth bridge - he says he'll keep all our people on board. I don't know what he's been smokin', but this is a dream come true."

"It's a done deal?"

"Unless this Woscialski dude gets kidnapped by pirates on his way here next week. The rest of his staff isn't as sold on us as he is - but he's the boss." Peterson, still grinning, stuck out his hand. "Congratulations to us both."

On the drive home I remembered the loony psychic's prediction. Maybe she *had* seen something in my palm. Besides thirty dollars, I mean.

Hmmmmmm..... there's more to this change in luck yet.

Read on ... Available July 15th.

*Thank
You*

