

Ficta @ Fabula

BITS

Short Story Magazine



Stories of apocalyptic proportions await you in this edition!

Spring 2014

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SHARD
by Andreas Zimmermann

Imagine...your favourite childhood toy comes to life, talks with you, and plays games with you.

Now imagine that toy is a Dragon.

Join Alex, Jared, and Madison as the gifts they are given become living, breathing dragons! Follow them on their adventures in a land far beyond where they thought possibility could ever take them!

Follow them to Shard.

Andreas has been writing stories of fiction for many years, and while his works have been produced in print or on-line for a number of local and international publications, Shard is his first solo-published novel.

His works are not limited to novels and short-stories. Andreas has written and directed local stage productions, and is looking to produce a stage musical and short film in 2014-2015. A sequel to Shard is currently being written, and is expected to be released in the same time frame.

Look for more information about upcoming projects, and about the author in general at his personal site: www.andreaszimmermann.ca

Available now through your local bookseller or preferred online retailer.

SHARD
by Andreas Zimmermann

Soft Cover ISBN
978-1-4620-8350-3

Hard Cover ISBN
978-1-4620-8351-0

Ficta Fabula

Owned By
Pages Of Stories, Inc.

Publisher -
Darlene Poier

Editor -
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Publisher's Say

My Dear Fellow Readers,
Welcome to the Spring 2014 issue of Ficta Fabula!

We've finally reached the point in the year where the snow has melted away (much to my surprise. I thought those glaciers were here to stay!). With each degree increase in the temperature there's much happiness and excitement about being able to finally leave your house and get back out in the world.

Those cozy Winter days did have some advantages. For me it provided good thinking and planning time (having said that, I'm willing to bet I could learn to think and plan in a warm climate!). A lot of that occurred as we try to figure out where we can best position this fantastic talent so that so many more people can enjoy these wonderful escapes. And the result was that we need help of the professional kind.

Gary and I went to see a young man that runs a PR firm. He's a very bright individual that gave us a great idea right off the top of his head. It's thanks to him that we now have Fabulous Fiction Fridays. Ryan Townend of William Joseph Communications in Calgary came up with this idea and we've been able to implement it fairly quickly.

It works really well with our philosophy about providing high quality reading entertainment for people all over the world. We

have access to all these great stories and it's high time that they saw the light of day. I'm happy to give them away if it gives someone a much needed escape from their day. It's a great way to start the weekend and end the week. All anyone has to do is just sit back, relax and let the story take you away.

But speaking of great escapes, not only are our older stories great little escapes, we've got a bunch more for you in this issue. We go from an apocalyptic Calgary (it sounds bad but I think I'd be ok with it) in "Early Retirement" by Sheryl Normandeau to a little bit of time travelling with "Positive Proof" from Fran Rizer; we finally find out whodunit with Andreas Zimmermann's final instalment of "Troubled Past" and Christine Sutton's Part 2 is just as jaw dropping as Part 1. Meanwhile Donna Fawcett brings us another entertaining murder mystery in "Farmer Johnson's Wife". That's only a partial list because I don't want to spoil the surprise for you inside. So many returning authors have put their imaginations to good use and we're the only ones that have these special stories.

These are your special little escapes. Check out what Fabulous Fiction Fridays is all about at www.fictafabula.com. Please feel free to send me an email at info@pagesofstories.com or visit our Facebook page.

Take care and happy reading!

Darlene Poier
Publisher, Ficta Fabula
Inspiring Creativity and Imagination
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Greetings from the Editor

When in search of inspiration, I often go looking for other people's quotes. Some are funny and some are insightful. Some are very short yet profound, like Ralph Waldo Emerson's: *"One must be an invenor to read well. There is then creative reading as well as well as creative writing."**

Sometimes themes come to me from multiple sources in a short time frame so, not surprisingly, I discovered this quote the day after I finished reading a section in *Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art*, where Madeleine L'Engle speaks about the unique partnership that exists between writers and readers. Regardless of whether the reader exists, the writer will still continue to produce words because that is what writers do. But how much more enjoyable the experience when they know someone is reading the words they have spent precious hours crafting.

When a creative, engaged reader picks up the creative work of the writer, something amazing happens. A partnership. These are the readers that the writer longs for. The ones who use their imagination to see the flock of birds flying overhead in "Someone to Watch Over Me" or laugh easily at the antics of the characters in "Early Retirement" and "Uncle Mick." They participate in a touching family relationship in "Into the Sun" and hear childhood laughter in "The Cool Dark Place."

The talented writers showcased in this edition of Ficta Fabula have spun tales that will inspire and entertain, no small feat and one to be celebrated. And thanks to the great creative readership this magazine enjoys, the authors can be confident that their stories will be remembered and appreciated for a long time to come.

Thanks for joining us here!

Laura Crowe, Editor, Ficta Fabula
www.imagineitinwriting.com

*Emerson quote: www.brainyquote.com

Early Retirement



By Sheryl Normandeau

Illustration by Dan Webster

So I'm sitting out on my porch in my underwear, lounging in the shade of the awning, when our neighbour Bill walks by. He's got a backpack slung over his shoulder, and it looks pretty heavy, bulging all out at crazy angles with whatever he's stuffed in there. He eyeballs me and gets this weird look on his face, starts shifting his load and walking faster. Like if he can get past me in a hurry, I'll somehow forget that I've seen him.

"Hey, neighbour," I call out, and that's when I notice that the backpack is bleeding. I start grinning. "Whatcha got in the bag, Bill? You know I'd share if I had something good."

"Go to hell," Bill grouses, picking up his amble. I scratch my armpit, and settle back down into the pleasant scoop of my lawn chair. Things just haven't been the same between Bill and me since I broke his lawnmower back in '06. Come to think of it, I might still have a few parts and pieces of it out in the shed, not that anyone can really use them now.

Bill's selfishness doesn't bother me; after all, Emma's got the fresh carcass of a grey squirrel stewing over the firepit in our backyard. No one's going hungry anywhere, not yet. Plenty of game to be had, especially in this part of the city. Plus, the vegetable garden is going guns-a-blazing in this weather. Emma still can't believe that she's growing tomatoes and peppers in Calgary in December. She's always eager to show me, her face split in smiles and her hands full of some ripe orb or another. Scurvy isn't going to be a problem in this new world, at least. Not that I am really worried.

If you've ever been to Calgary you'll know that growing tomatoes and peppers in December is completely foreign to us. Find out what the heck happened! You can purchase this and other awesome stories by going to www.pagesofstories.com/thereadingroom.html.

Someone To Watch Over Me



By Michael O'Shea

Illustration by Dan Webster

The whoosh of wing beats came first, followed seconds later by a glorious honking as they passed overhead—seven sleek figures in perfect formation, heading towards the setting sun.

"What are they, Granddad?" I asked.

"Geese, Jamie. They're Snow Geese. They brighten our lives for a little while until instinct calls them home."

"Why do they fly in that V shape?"

"Well, scientists say it reduces drag and resistance. That makes flying easier for the ones at the rear. But I prefer to think it's a victory sign—victory over the bonds of earth."

"But doesn't the one in front get tired? He does all the hard work."

"When the time comes and the leader's tired, he drops behind and has a rest. And then another takes over."

"Who decides when it's time for him to go?" (I was a persistent little bugger when I was young.)

"Nature, Jamie. Nature decides everything."

"I see," I said. "You must be like nature then, Granddad. You know nearly everything, don't you?"

"Not everything, Jamie. Sometimes it's better not to know everything."

This is important to remember for later on in the story. Find out what that end is by going to www.pagesofstories.com/thereadingroom.html.

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Farmer Johnson's Wife

By Donna Fawcett

Illustration by Dan Webster



Helena knew she was the typical gold digger and she was fine with that. She had worked hard to keep her new family in the dark. Even if she hadn't, did it really matter? What was important was that she had her husband fooled. Elias Johnson was seventy-five and stinking rich and Helena doted on him enough to erase any questions that their union had been contrived for the sake of money. Five years she had endured having the old goat paw her. Five years she had gone with very little in the way of compensation for it and now it was time to collect her dues.

Helena had met Elias on a cruise seven years earlier. At thirty-five, she knew it was only a matter of time before her looks faded and opportunities like this one didn't come along every day.

She wouldn't have given the man much thought if she hadn't overheard him in the piano lounge boasting to a fellow cruiser that he'd just sold his large dairy operation for eight million bucks. She had sat a little straighter, leaned closer and quietly stirred her drink. When he went on to say that he'd also managed to tuck away an additional nest egg into investments that had multiplied over the years, she knew her trolling days were done.

The good news is that at least she's an honest gold digger. I mean what could go wrong...really?

Take care and happy reading!

Troubled Past

Part 3



By Andreas Zimmermann

Illustration by Dan Webster

In the first two parts of our story, Private Detective Alexander Knight and his partner, Dean, have been helping Gordon Cochrane, a race car driver of some renown, cope with visions of a ghost, which seems to want his help. Alex takes on the supernatural case, which now has led them back to the race track where it all started, hoping to solve the mystery before another life is lost!

The two detectives and Gordon pulled up to the Race City Speedway just as a thunderous roar went up from the crowd. They were between races, and some motorcyclist hotshots were doing tricks around the finish line.

Alex ignored the antics and applause, making a beeline for the Cochrane Pit. He had taken a call from Sharon just before they arrived, and after hearing what she had to report to him Alex called Dean and told him to meet at the track, right away.

As they approached the pit, Randy was frantically yelling into his cell phone, a finger in his other ear.

"Tell him to get his butt down here five minutes ago! I need a driver, and I need him here yesterday! Race starts in twenty minutes!"

Gordon frowned. "Replacing me already, hey bro?"

The real question, is why does the ghost appear now? What's the underlying motivation?

Into The Sun

By Claire Buckle

Illustration by Dan Webster



“We’re nearly there Mum,” I say, hitting the off button on the car radio, relieved to have muted the doom-laden aria. Keeping my eyes on the twisting road, I stretch across and gently shake her shoulder. Considering Mum’s eighty, she’s coped well with the long journey. For the last hour she’s dozed, warmed by the sun, head bent forwards, her lips moving occasionally, as though speaking silent secrets. She jolts awake.

“According to the sat nav,” I say, glancing at its small screen, “we want the next on the right.”

“Hmm?” She’s disorientated for only a few seconds. “Ah, yes, that’s it,” she says, “by the little shop on the corner.”

I smile, amazed at Mum’s recall and move into the lane, so narrow that its high hedgerows, entwined with white *Convolvulus* and gleaming pink Dog Roses, swish against the sides of the car.

The road opens up on a bend and a knot tightens in my stomach. I stop the car by a white barred gate. “This is it Jean,” Mum says under her breath. “The entrance to Fairvale House.”

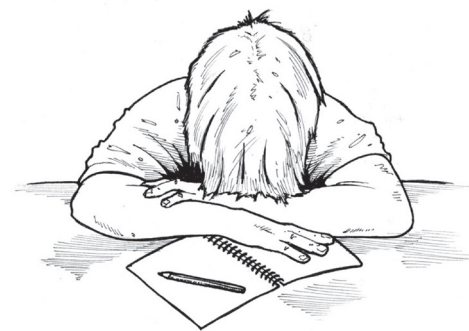
So, what happened at Fairvale House? You can find out by going to www.pagesofstories.com/thereadingroom.html and click on “Add to Cart” by this issue of Ficta Fabula.

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Positive Proof

By Fran Rizer

Illustration by Dan Webster



Evelyn Hillshire remembered the day Kennedy died. Not Bobby. Jack. She’d admired both Kennedys, but she adored John. Neither five decades nor rumors could diminish her infatuation with the American Camelot of the sixties. Now all the to-do about the fiftieth anniversary of President Kennedy’s assassination fascinated her and helped fill the long, lonely days of her seventieth year.

Tonight the only sound and light in Evelyn’s bedroom at Pretty Pines Assisted Living came from the television. The CNN commentator’s voice held her attention. “The animated gifs and most recent computer-enhanced version of the famous Zapruder film made at the Kennedy assassination still does not provide proof beyond a reasonable doubt . . .”

No real proof after fifty years, thought Evelyn as she took off her glasses, placed them on the bedside table, and reached for the remote to turn off the TV. She froze when the broadcaster continued, “Tonight we also have a film that has never before been shown to the public. Due to a quirk of fate, this footage that might have given positive proof about a second assassin on the grassy knoll does not provide that evidence. Watch carefully. The camera was focused on the knoll, but the photographer turned just at the moment of the assassination.”

The film was short. First it panned the crowds, next moved slowly across the grassy knoll, focused briefly on a man standing there holding something, and then moved rapidly to zoom in on the face of a child—a blond-haired boy of nine or ten. The image jerked suddenly, went out of focus, and became clear again as it showed the open limousine with the fatally wounded President.

There’s a reason the photographer turned.

The Game

By Andreas Zimmermann

Illustration by Dan Webster



Jamie Matheson was a good athlete, a good student, and a good kid all around. Not exceptional at anything, mind you: not an All-Star with either the football or basketball or volleyball teams, not an honour student, not the most popular guy in class; just a good kid getting good grades, and getting by. That was the picture everyone on the outside saw.

When January eighteenth came around with his supposedly special birthday—the eighteenth day of the month, the eighteenth year—he just wanted to skip it. Or better yet, fast forward.

Nothing good could ever come on that day again. Not since his father had been killed on January eighteenth, on Jamie's sixteenth birthday.

They'd waited at the restaurant that night for his father, ready to celebrate with a birthday dinner. His dad was the only one not there. Probably just late at work, his mom had said. They ordered their food, even got a plate and a glass of wine for his dad, ate their meal . . . he never showed up.

Finally his mom's cell phone rang. She was expecting it to be him. The darkening of her face, the loss of the smile as it turned to a sorrow filled with horror told the rest of them that something was terribly wrong.

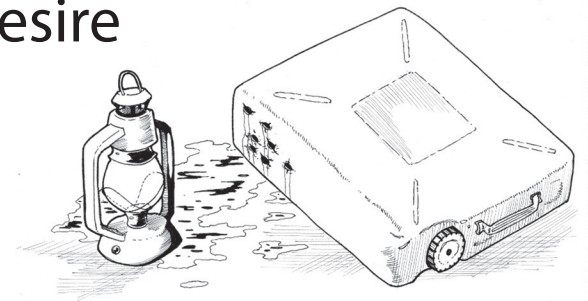
It was bad. No doubt about it. But then something unique and special happens that makes all the difference.

Burning Desire

Part 2

By Christine Sutton

Illustration by Dan Webster



On holiday in Majorca, Staff Nurse Steph Middleton is delighted to find ex-patient Michael Walker staying at the same hotel. Burned during a vain attempt to save his wife and unborn child from a house fire, Mike is charming and charismatic and Steph happily accepts his invitation to dinner. That night, back in her room, she receives a call. The police investigation into the fire indicates arson . . . and Mike is their number one suspect.

Steph lay on the bed, gazing out at the pale Majorcan sunrise. She'd slept fitfully, her mind constantly turning over the events of the previous night. Mike's embrace and his strange behavior afterwards . . . Mandy's telephone call . . . the news of the police investigation. Surely they couldn't really suspect Mike of setting fire to his own home, of roasting alive his wife and unborn child? It was too ghastly even to contemplate.

Yet according to Mandy, that was exactly what they did suspect. There was the punctured chemical container found in the cellar, close to a burned out oil-lamp. There was the 'overheating car' that had delayed his return home, a car that was found by a mechanic to have nothing wrong beyond a loose radiator cap. Most damning of all, there were the injuries to Lucy, the bruises on her arms and the blow to her head.

It looks really bad, but what actually happened is far worse. Find out what it was by going to www.pagesofstories.com/thereadingroom.html and click on "Add to Cart" by this issue of Ficta Fabula.

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The Photograph

By Richard Home

Illustration by Dan Webster

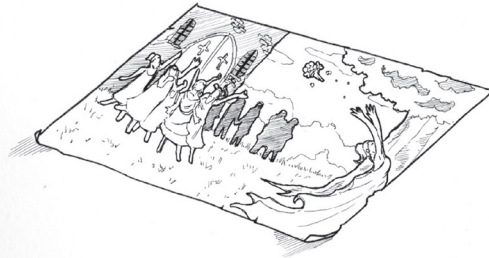
For a rather overcast Monday morning, Louise felt surprisingly good. She had a new boyfriend of a few weeks, and she was feeling optimistically happy. Her springy step accompanied a broad smile, as she approached her workplace.

Carl was not only good looking and a really good kisser, but he had a terrific sense of humour and a good job. He had also managed to buy himself an apartment overlooking the harbour, and at the age of twenty three that was no mean feat, even this far out of London. Yes, after puckering up to an assortment of frogs during her twenty four and a half years, Louise was convinced that she had finally found her prince.

She hummed happily to herself as she let herself into the shop and turned off the burglar alarm. She quickly sorted out her job plan. From her limited experience the photographic shop would not be bothered by customers for at least thirty minutes, so she had time to get her thoughts focussed on work. There were several, fairly simple enlargements to carry out, and a couple of image restorations that she was looking forward to. Best of all, at the end of last week her cousin had brought in an old picture of his parents' wedding, and had asked Louise if she could clean it up and enlarge it so that it could be presented to the bride and groom on their silver wedding anniversary.

There's a special photograph that appears. One that changes Louise's life in an instant. Find out what it was by going to www.pagesofstories.com/thereadingroom.html and click on "Add to Cart" by this issue of Ficta Fabula.

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Hotel Nostalgia

By Janice Law

Illustration by Dan Webster

The old white hotel had been in the center of Yantauk Mills forever. It sat smack on the state road with the sidewalk squeezed between its fading clapboards and the curb. Pete had been going there for years; with his family as a boy, with Katie and their children, and now just the two of them. It didn't have the best food or the prettiest ambiance, but it was convenient, and if you wanted to catch up with anyone from a tardy tradesman to your kid's teacher, the hotel with its small tavern and grill was the place to go.

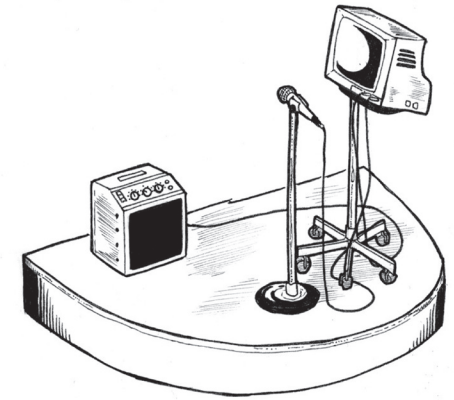
Pete could, therefore, say that he had an honest interest in the place, and when he saw the Under New Ownership sign in the window, he told Katie they should go that night.

"A very sudden development," agreed the new owner, a nondescript man of uncertain age: unlined and spry but with gray hair and thick glasses behind which small, hazel eyes darted like minnows. His name was Morton Taxar, but he said that everyone called him 'Doc.'

"We knew Lynn hadn't been too well," Joan said, concerned.

"Gone to Florida, I understand. Dealt with her son. But welcome," he said, switching into full host mode and ushering them into the dining side. They were alone, except for the Morrisises, an ancient pair who were always first in line. Pete was surprised and a little disappointed that the place looked seedier than ever. Under New Ownership usually meant at least a paint job and new plastic plants. The only sign of novelty at the Drovers Inn was the little platform—you couldn't call it a stage—between the kitchen door and the bar, with a mike, a karaoke screen, and an amplifier.

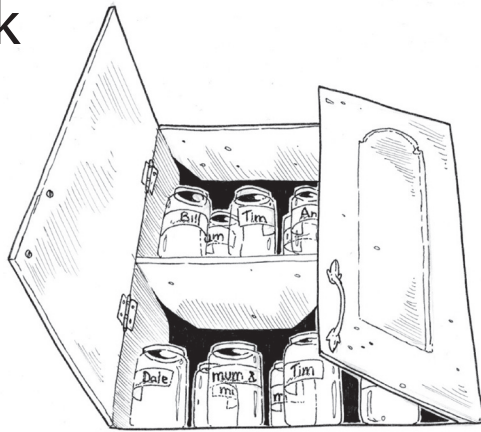
There's just something about that stage.



The Cool, Dark Place

By Alan C. Williams

Illustration by Dan Webster



I held the knife hilt in my hand. The blade glistened in the morning sunlight. I slowly turned it from side to side.

Two months since he'd left me and my anger was as intense as the first day. It was fused with betrayal and a hundred other emotions. Frustration, love, jealousy . . . my own failure. He'd actually gone away on what was to have been our honeymoon. Furthermore, he'd taken my best—no, make that 'worst'—friend as his new lover.

"I hate him . . . so much!"

My gran smiled and took the knife from me to dry it. We continued the washing up in silence for awhile then she said, "It would do you good to get out, Tammy. Get a bit of, what do they call it . . . 'retail therapy'? No good brooding . . ."

Of course she was right. However sometimes logic comes a poor second when emotions are concerned and hatred is one powerful emotion. I knew that lately I'd been giving my work colleagues a hard time with my sour disposition and short temper.

As I mechanically washed the dishes, I turned to see my gran, smiling. She'd always been there, supporting me. She'd had her share of misery yet she'd moved on. Why couldn't I? There'd been so many hours that I'd lain on my bed, sobbing and seething with anger at what they'd done to me; also repeatedly analysing what went wrong as well as trying to rationalise my shattered life.

A unique way to deal with pain and sorrow. There just might be something to this.

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UNCLE MICK

By Patsy Collins

Illustration by Dan Webster



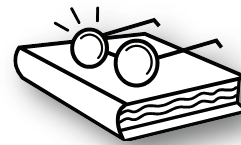
Lucy couldn't believe it had come to this, looking for a man in the frozen food section of her local supermarket. She decided that even if the men she'd seen had actually all been available to take home, she would still have left alone. The best specimen was looking at her as if he didn't exactly consider her to be bargain of the week either. Lucy couldn't blame him she decided, as she began piling her purchases onto the belt for the check-out person to scan. Her local supermarket had a singles evening the first Tuesday of each month. It was a marketing gimmick for the sad and lonely. That, Lucy told herself, was not why she was there. She needed to buy groceries. This shop was on her way home and at least on singles nights the queues moved quickly.

Of course the supermarket didn't turn away any potential customers just because they were part of a couple, but anyone not looking for love tended to avoid shopping that night so as not to attract unwelcome attention. Most of the customers at these things were either spotty students or no longer young. The women wore too much make-up and not enough skirt. The men had ponytails; it wasn't nice. Those who were trying hard, filled their baskets with smoked salmon, organic strawberries and Chablis. Lucy placed her tampons next to her antidandruff shampoo, and then added a couple of tins of the store's own label beans. Her heart wasn't really in this at all and she'd have stayed at home had she not promised her friend Sally that she'd go out somewhere there was at least a chance she could meet someone.

The only offer she got was, "D'you want help packing?"

Wow. Almost tough to refuse that heartfelt offer. :) Love is tricky and finding it is only the first stage. But sometimes it can be found in the unlikelyst of places.

Take care and happy reading!



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For previous and future editions of this short story collection, use the contact information provided below. Happy reading!

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