

# TWISTED PULP

M A G A Z I N E

ISSUE #46

IRREVERENT-NEO-NOIR-PULP  
FICTION AND ARTICLES



**STORIES, ART & ARTICLES FROM**

Thomas Malafarina ~ Brian Purcell ~ Frank Larnerd  
Cherry Zette ~ Kay ~ Kenneth Gallant ~ Tyson Blue  
Beth Lee ~ Hark! The 87th Precinct

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THOMAS M. MALAFARINA**

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## **DOERS OF STUFF**

**Chauncey Haworth**  
Publisher/The man with a plan

**Lothar Tuppan**  
Editor in chief/The guy with a high

**Mark Slade**  
Rick Ashley enthusiast/The dude with a ‘tude

Cover By and Of:

# KAY

# EDITORIAL

The background of the page is a close-up photograph of a dark red, textured fabric, likely a leather jacket. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the folds and creases of the material, creating a rich, warm atmosphere. The word 'EDITORIAL' is printed in a white, serif font at the top center of the image.

# I WAITED FOR YOU



**THOMAS M. MALAFARINA**

**Robert was a devoted husband—until grief sent him spiraling into guilt, drink, and meaningless affairs. When the final call comes from his dying wife, he races to her side—reeking of betrayal. But death isn't always the end, and some goodbyes are too late to take back.**

## I Waited For You

**Thomas M. Malafarina**

*Based on a work of art of the same title  
by Niall Parkinson*

He awoke with a start, hearing his smartphone vibrating on the nightstand. In one clumsy motion, Robert swung his feet out from under the covers, sat upright, and looked at the phone's display for a millisecond before pressing the 'ACCEPT' icon and answering with a gruff, sleepy "Hello?" The name displayed had been Sunny Rest.

"Mr. Nelson?" The professional-sounding

voice on the other end of the line said. Robert felt the bed move slightly as the woman lying next to him tossed, mumbled something incoherent, farted, and then apparently fell back asleep.

Robert rolled his eyes in disgust and replied into the phone, "Yes. This is Robert Nelson. Is everything all right?"

The voice on the other end said, "It's time, Mr. Nelson. You had better get over here as quickly as possible. She said she is waiting for you, but I'm afraid she has little time left."

"I'll be right there," Robert said as he disconnected the call while gathering his various articles of clothing, which were strewn all about the floor. As he bent to pick up his underwear, he felt a whiskey-induced belch rising in his throat and suppressed it, feeling it might be vomit. He could taste the previous night's alcohol churning inside him, and he preferred to keep it down if at all humanly possible.

He staggered over to a doorway in the unfamiliar bedroom, which he hoped would lead to a hallway and which in turn might get him to a bathroom. He found the bathroom and stumbled in still naked, and dropped his clothes in a heap on the worn linoleum floor. Under even the best of conditions, the phone call would have devastated him, but he physically felt like crap right now, which was a perfect match to how he felt emotionally.

Robert splashed some cold water on his face, then used more to wet his hair. He made a feeble attempt to finger-comb the unruly mess since he could not find a comb or brush. The bathroom was filthy, as if it hadn't been cleaned in months. Women's clothing was scattered about, and undergarments seemed to hang from every available place. He managed to dig under some random supplies and found a tube of toothpaste, but no brush. So again, making good use of his digits, he did his best to finger-brush his teeth.

He knew the intense-tasting toothpaste would do little to mask his morning breath, which was savory with remnants of the previous night's binge, but he had no time; he had to get moving. He had finally gotten 'the call,' and that meant there was no time to waste. Robert hurriedly threw on his underwear, then his pants and shirt, doing his best to make himself look presentable. He could only find one sock, so he threw it on the floor, slipped his shoes over bare feet, and hurried back out into the hall.

"Hey ... where the hell are you sneaking off to?" A slurred, husky voice said from down the hall. It was ... it was ... his bedmate from the previous night ... whatever her name might be. He wasn't surprised to realize he had absolutely no idea. She was standing naked in the hallway, leaning on the bedroom door-frame, smoking a cigarette. The woman looked a lot older, a lot less attractive, and a lot more haggard than she had appeared the night before. The saying 'road

hard and put away wet' flashed through his mind.

"Gotta go." Robert said, continuing toward the stairs, "Family emergency."

"Call me." The woman called after him, making the hand gesture of index finger and pinky up to the side of her wrinkled face.

"I will." He replied, knowing full well that would never happen. He seldom called any of these women back, even on those rare occasions when he did happen to remember their names.

He rushed out the front door of the row house, not having the slightest idea where he was. He took a look around and found his car parked near the curb halfway up the block. He realized he was somewhere in the city, and no matter where that might be, Robert had to get to Sunny Rest as soon as he possibly could.

As he drove out of the unfamiliar city neighborhood, Robert saw signs for the bypass. Once there, he'd find his way easily. Heading out of the city, he thought briefly about the woman whose bed he had just fled. How many had there been in the last month or so? He couldn't recall and didn't want to. There was no joy to be gained from such recollections, no pleasant memories of sexual conquests, only gut-wrenching guilt.

His mind was swimming with a myriad of disjointed thoughts. He was still hungover, and now

he was heading to Sunny Rest, likely for the last time. There had been many false alarms, but somehow deep inside, Robert knew this was the real deal. The guilt he felt about the place he had just left was tied directly to where he was now heading. He was going to see Cindy, his wife of more than thirty years, and the one true love of his life.

Cindy was in Sunny Rest Hospice Center, and she was dying. She had been dying for the past year. Despite his actions, Robert truly loved his wife, and their marriage had been one of the few successful ones. It all seemed so unfair. Most of their friends were divorced, separated, or stayed together in rotten marriages for the children's sake. But his and Cindy's had been one for the record books, at least until cancer struck.

Her decline had been quick, and only three months earlier, Cindy had been permanently hospitalized, needing round-the-clock care. Then, a month ago, Robert had been told the end was near, and Cindy would have to go into Sunny Rest Hospice Center. The hospitalization devastated Robert. They had both known she was terminal during the past year, and they did all they could to get her affairs in order. They'd even sold their large home and moved into a small apartment, and got Robert ready for his life alone after she passed. One of the things that Robert found so distressing was how they had spent far too much of her last year preparing for her imminent death.

Robert had tried his best to hold it together after Cindy was hospitalized. Still, after two weeks of barely sleeping and wandering throughout the lifeless apartment at night, he went to his employer and requested a leave of absence. His boss agreed, since Robert could no longer focus on his duties, and the man decided he should spend what time remained with Cindy.

During the first few weeks in the hospital, Robert and Cindy spent their days holding hands and reliving their past life events together. But as Cindy's pain increased, so did the number of medicines required to suppress it. Soon, Cindy was spending most of the time they had together sleeping. Robert stayed by her side as she continued to lose weight and wither away to nothing right before his eyes. These weeks caused Robert to plunge into a deep, unbearable depression, the likes of which he had never experienced in his life.

Robert knew he had to do something, anything to distract his thoughts from Cindy's worsening condition, or he surely would go mad. However, no matter what he tried, it just didn't seem to help. Finally, one night after spending the day watching his frail wife sleep almost nonstop, Robert stopped by a local bar on his way home. He couldn't stand the thought of facing the empty apartment again. He wasn't usually a drinking man, but he would occasionally have one with dinner back when he and Cindy could still go out to eat. But that night, he drank, and he drank, and damn

if it didn't feel good. Several hours later, he wasn't thinking about Cindy or his problems any longer. He was barely capable of thinking at all.

Thus began a ritual which he practiced religiously night after night. Robert would awaken late in the morning and freshen up before going to the hospital. Not that it mattered because most of the day, Cindy was unresponsive. But he always took care to eliminate any tell-tale odors for those few lucid moments his wife had each day. He would spend his time with Cindy, then stop by a bar, drink until he was plastered, go home, sleep it off, and start all over the following day. Robert knew this was dangerous and bad for his health, but he didn't care any longer. All he wanted was to be completely numb.

Then, after about a week or two of this routine, something unexpected and disturbing happened, and unknown to Robert at that time, it would be the first of many such occurrences. Following another night of binge drinking, Robert had awoken in a strange bed, naked with an equally peculiar woman. He had no memory of how he had gotten there or what they had done. But regardless, he was riddled with guilt. He had never been unfaithful to his wife during their entire marriage and would have never even considered doing such a thing. And then it happened again, and then again.

Soon, it, too, became as much a part of his nightly ritual as the drinking had been. And the closer

his wife got to death, the more guilty he felt about it. And the worse he felt, the more he drank. It was no longer just a vicious cycle but had become a downward spiral at an ever-increasing speed. Now it seemed like he woke up in some new bed with some unknown woman every morning, and he had no idea how he had gotten there.

Now driving down the bypass, Robert saw the exit for Sunny Rest. Only a few minutes had passed, but it seemed like it had been a lifetime to Robert. He felt as if he had aged ten years in the past ten minutes. He haphazardly parked his car, raced to the entrance, then down the hall to the room where he knew Cindy awaited him for what would probably be the last time. His stomach was sick with grief as he walked into her dimly lit, quiet bedroom. As he approached the bed, a nurse walked by him and gave him a disapproving look. He was taken aback, feeling as if this woman thought she had the right to judge him.

He looked over to his wife's deathbed and saw her emaciated form lying there, looking at him with eyes that seemed much too large for their sunken sockets. She was a living skeleton. Robert could tell she was aware the time of her passing was upon them, and all he wanted to do was vomit. He couldn't come to grips with the fact that in just a few moments, his once beautiful wife would be dead. She weakly lifted her right arm and crooked a bony finger, indicating that he could come to her. She tried to raise her arms

to hug him as he approached, but was too weak, so he wrapped his arms gently about her skeletal frame.

Cindy's pale lips touched his ear, and he heard her say, "I waited for you." Robert understood she was ready to pass on but wanted to say one last goodbye to him first, to tell him she loved him, and to make sure he would be all right without her. But as Robert softly held her, he felt her body tense and become rigid. That was when he suddenly realized his tragic mistake.

In the past, Robert had always managed to shower, shave, and brush his teeth before visiting Cindy, and most of those times they rarely had the opportunity to be this close. But in his haste and stupor, Robert had forgotten to do so, and now Cindy held him closely, taking in all of the odors surrounding him: the foul stench of stale cigarettes, booze, sweat, cheap perfume, and sex. She knew instantly what he had done.

Cindy released her weak grip on Robert and slid back down to the pillow. He stood staring lamely down into those once beautiful eyes. Cindy's face bore a look that seemed to encompass many emotions simultaneously: shock, disappointment, sorrow, grief, anger, and even hatred. Her bulging eyes seemed to bore a hole right through Robert. They silently screamed, "How could you?" inside his brain. Her pale lips began to tremble, and in a raspy voice, she said, "I ... waited ... for ... YOU!" And then, a moment later, she died, her eyes losing focus but never breaking

contact with Robert's.

Robert was heartsick, realizing not only that his wife was gone, but that instead of the peaceful passing they had always hoped for, the last living realization she had was that her husband was a lying, cheating, drunken whore monger. His memory of their last moment together would be that he had been out partying with women while she lay dying, thinking only of him. Robert fell to his knees next to his wife's deathbed and wept uncontrollably.

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Sitting on a chair in his tiny apartment, which now seemed even more prominent than before, Robert sipped his whiskey on the rocks, already half-drunk at two in the afternoon, having just come back from burying his wife. The funeral had been a small, private affair with only a few friends and relatives in attendance. Robert and Cindy had no children, but a few nieces and nephews had stopped by to offer their condolences.

Robert wished it had been he who died and not Cindy. He could feel his guilt eating away at his insides as cancer had devoured his wife. And worst of all, he was happy with the feeling. As far as he was concerned, there wasn't a death painful enough to make him suffer for what he had done to her. In the past, the alcohol had always managed to numb him and block out all of his thoughts, but now it seemed

to have the opposite effect. Now all he could think about was Cindy and how what he had done to her was beyond unforgivable.

He clumsily lifted his glass to polish off the last of his whiskey when he noticed something strange on the wall across the room. It appeared to be a solitary black dot forming on the surface of the wall. Robert had no idea what might have been causing the stain, but he staggered over to the wall and sat down on the floor to get a closer look. By the time he arrived at the wall, a second dot had appeared. He stared at them, not having a clue what they might be.

Within a few seconds, there were ten dots evenly spaced in two semicircles. Then, beneath the dots, two shapes began to form, resembling the palms of two hands. They reminded Robert of when two hands are placed on the surface of a heavily fogged mirror, and the area around the image even seemed liquid-like, trickling downward.

“What the Hell!” Robert exclaimed. Then the image on the wall continued to grow. Above what now looked like two black, blood-dripping handprints, a haggard, bloody face began to appear. At first, Robert couldn’t tell whether the image was of a man or a woman because its features weren’t recognizable. But then it became much clearer. He could see the hate-filled eyes bulging from sunken skeletal orbs, and he knew instantly it was his dead wife, Cindy, who returned to take her vengeance.

Deep inside his mind, he heard a dying raspy voice crying, “I ... waited ... for ... YOU” repeatedly as it increased in volume with each horrifying repetition. Then the wall seemed to become fluid, and the image began to stretch out, coming ever closer to him. He was paralyzed with terror at the horrifying sight before him.

“I’m so ... sorry ... Cindy.” Robert began to wail as the wall stretched out toward him, the blackened image reaching for him. Then he felt the icy cold tips of the fingers touch the sides of his face, and the inside of his brain screamed with the words, “I ... waited ... for ... YOU!” He felt a stabbing pressure in his chest and pain shooting down his left arm just seconds before he collapsed in a heap onto the apartment floor.

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The police investigator and EMT stood outside the apartment, discussing what they had found inside.

“God! That smell was unbearable.” The police officer said. “How long do you think he was dead?”

The EMT thought about it for a few moments and said. “That’s hard to say. The medical examiner will have to make that final determination, but to be honest with you, I’d guess it had to be a few weeks, especially based on the decomposed condition of the body.”

“Yeah. That was pretty bad. So what do you think?”

“You mean the cause of death?” The EMT said, “Not sure, but my guess would be either a stroke or a heart attack. From what the neighbors said, he and his wife only moved into the place a few months ago, and apparently, she died a few weeks ago. Maybe the stress of losing her was just too much.”

The policeman said, “I’ve heard stories of couples dying within a few days of each other when the surviving spouse can’t live without his mate. They often call it dying of a broken heart.”

“Well, I don’t know about that.” The EMT said, “But he definitely died of something. It looked to me like he might have been sitting on the floor looking at that water stain on the wall.”

The police officer said, “Could be. I checked with the super, and he told me that with all the rain we’ve been having lately, there have been leaks in a number of the apartment units. Apparently, the roof needs to be repaired, and the water’s leaking down between the walls and has caused the stains.”

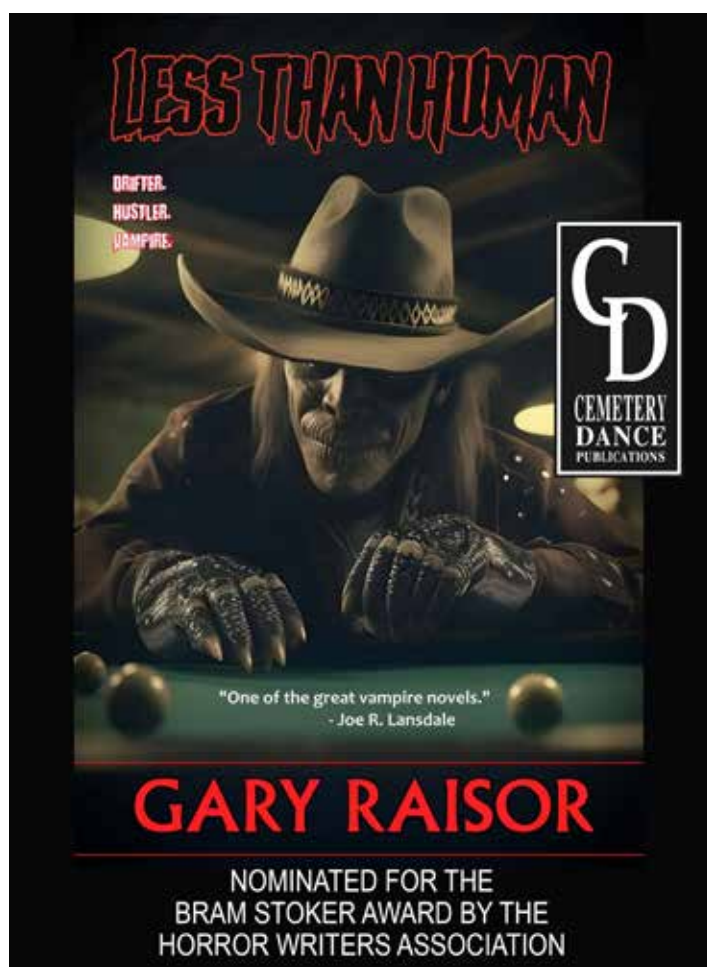
“Not surprising.” The EMT said. “This is an old building. But ... did you notice anything unusual ... you know ... about the stain?”

“No. Not really.” The police officer said. “It just looks like a big old stain to me.”

The EMT said. “You’re probably right. But to me, if you look at it a certain way, it resembles the backs of two people’s heads walking away. You know ... like a man and a woman.”

The police officer looked at the image closer, then scratched his head and said, “I don’t know ... I don’t see it. Oh well, I guess with a spot like this, anyone might be able to see just about anything they wanted or needed to see.”

“You’re probably right.” The EMT said. Well, we’d best be getting the remains out of here.”





**INTERVIEW**

**WITH**

**BRIAN**

**PURCELL**

Brian Purcell's story explores the tension between mainstream success and uncompromising creativity. From Sydney's vibrant but unforgiving music scene to the unpredictable rise of AI in art, his journey spans decades of cultural change.

## Interview with Brian Purcell

*Brian was a founding member and the singer/lyricist for the alternative Sydney band Distant Locust (1982-95) with whom he toured Europe in 1991, playing in the Netherlands, Italy and Germany.*

*The original band began in late '82 with an unashamedly dadaistic and avant-garde approach to creating music. This lineup consisted of Brian, creating lyrics, vocals and gizmo sounds, Matthew Bright on keyboards and synths, and Tony Lawrence on bass, echo and treated electronic instruments. The period 82-85 was amazingly productive in term of creating sonically challenging work, and eventually led to them playing live at obscure inner-city venues like French's, and warehouses such as The Gunnery. Only recently some live footage of an early warehouse gig was uncovered, the second clip here; to differentiate the early band from the later, very different lineup, these earlier songs were under the name 'Sleeping Psychics'.*

*These days Brian is also a Poet and an Artist poet living in Bellingen on the mid-north coast of NSW,*

*Australia; many of his paintings are steeped in the local landscape. For ten years he was the singer and lyricist for the rock band Distant Locust. Now he is working as an exhibiting painter and writer. He has twice been a finalist in the Bluethumb Art Prize and is a featured painter on their site. He has two new books of poetry out in Jan. 2025: Filmworks, and as editor 100 Poets. His earlier book, The Leaving, was released in 2022, and all titles are published by Flying Islands Inc.*

**Q: When you started the band Distant locust, were there musicians or other bands that influenced you to take up music?**

### **Brian Purcell**

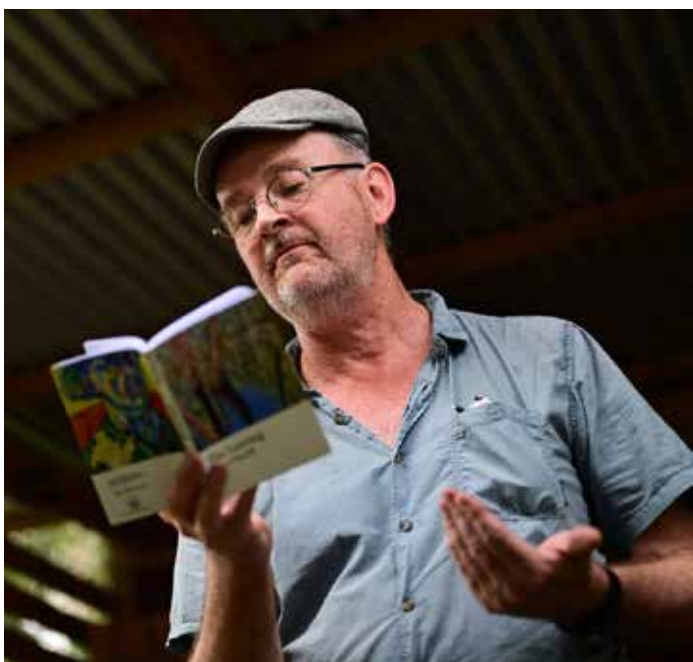
I loved music from the beginning – growing up it actually helped me develop an identity different from the normal people around me – whom I didn't want to be like! I grew up in a claustrophobic, crazy Catholic family. I'm sure there's some good aspects to religion – but I can't get past this weird repression



I experienced, that I felt was designed to strangle the individual in me. Anyway, a rebel friend from school was getting into King Crimson and The Velvet Underground. This was incredible music! I dove into it: the early ambient Fripp and Eno LPs, the weirdness of Eno's early solo LPs like *Here Come the Warm Jets* – it led me on to The Velvet's John Cale, whom Eno worked with. Crazy beautiful work: songs like Ship of Fools, Engine, Sudden Death, the album *Paris 1919*. His and Eno's lyrics were a massive influence on my own writing. And then Punk happened – what a time to be alive!

Radio was very important back then, and somehow we got this govt-subsidised alternative radio station called Double-J. Anyway, one day I was driving along and I heard this – music – or something barking out of the radio. What was it? I pulled over, overcome, listening to this:

Here I come Constantinople  
Here I come coConstantinople  
I am coming Constantinople  
Here I come



All the leaves are off of the oak and  
All of the sheep have followed the spoken  
Word. I'm coming Constantinople  
Here I come...

The Residents. It didn't make sense and yet made perfect sense to my soul. The highest form of rebellion – and my friends and I in the band realised we would walk a similarly crazy road. As Blake said, "Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without improvement are roads of Genius."

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**Q: The early 80s was an interesting time period for music. Was Sydney a big music scene?**

**BP**

It was really big. When sometimes Sydney rock venue listings showing the bands come up from the early 80's on social media, you realise how rich it was. And alt bands had lots of work at inner-city venues. The thing is, the mainstream record companies were big on OzRock – AC/DC, Midnight Oil, Cold Chisel – and if you didn't tick those boxes, you could forget about a record deal. And if you played such music outside the inner city, you'd get beaten up. There were alternative labels, but Distant Locust was too alternative for them! We were called 'the underbelly of the underground!' After some years, we had a passionate following but were frustrated at even the alt-labels not accepting us. One label said, 'You're too weird for Australia – you should go to Europe.' So we scrimped and saved, and in early '91, had enough for some airfares. We left everything behind – jobs, relationships, and took off. That was the beginning of a crazy year.

**Q: When you write poetry or paint, do you still hear melodies and music that goes with each project?**

**BP**

Poetry is its own music, so I usually write in silence. But when I wrote lyrics, usually I wrote so quickly that by the time the band had come up with the song, the lyrics were complete. I'd crouch down in front of the speakers while they jammed, let the music cover me, and tap into something that would let me access a song, and write it sometimes almost as fast as I could scribble down the words.

**Q: How did you guys come up with the name of the band?**

**BP**

Being in a band was an accident! The truth is that I was a poet who fell into it by chance. My younger brother was a gifted guitarist (actually on the spectrum, a bit like me). An idiot savant. His high school friends came around one day to jam, and they were doing stuff unlike anything I've ever heard before. Spontaneous, challenging stuff. So I'd sit in and make up and then sing strange stories that turned into lyrics. We were pretty poor – our instruments were discarded early synths and devices of all kinds. Our drum machine was called 'Max' – he was found in an op shop. It seemed to have become disconnected from one of those quirky organs families used to have at the time, with popular presets like 'Foxtrot'. We used to press two rhythms at the same time – so like 'Rhumba/Cha-cha'. When we started playing live, other bands would come up after the gigs and ask how we got those strange rhythms. Their mouths dropped open when they saw Max.

The name Distant Locust originated from a strange, dirge-like song we wrote called, 'My Brother was a Distant Locust'. My brother was so far out on the spectrum that I guess he was very distant from most people. In his own distant world, but not too far from us (the band) who were distant in a different sense. Though the other reason might be because of the old synths and 'Max' himself, which emitted loud hums from the dodgy old electronics, like distant locusts. It was always a challenge playing live!

**Q: What was it about Electronic music you guys chose as your sound? You all just liked the way it sounded? Really wasn't a lot of bands using synth and electronics in music at that time, not until later mid-80s and 90s.**



**The Leaving**  
Brian Purcell

## BP

We were all inspired by the Punk, do-it-yourself ethic. If you were a non-musician, you could get away with making weird sounds on synths – if you had the right approach. There were three in our band, and only one had musical training – and that wasn't me! But you know, I was in a choir at Christian Brothers. I could sing like an angel – but more often than not, I was required to sing like a devil. The bass/synth player Tony was into electronics and fixed ATMs for a living – he invented devices that when you plugged them into a bass, sounded like a chorus of demons. Once he plugged it in the wrong way, and the frequency started to soar ever higher, uncontrollable. Everyone started panicking at the venue and running around – except him, as he was deaf in one ear and didn't understand what was happening. That gig ended right then and there. At some of our early gigs, there was a stampede for the doors, but we just kept playing the music we liked.

Our one trained musician, keyboardist Matthew was really into the New York band, Suicide, and The Stooges. After a time playing live we went from quirky/weird to quirky/heavy/weird. The heavy part came when we were playing some very gnarly underground places, and the skinheads looked ready to beat us up - they were very confronted by this weird music. Though there was always a segment of an audience who were fascinated with us, and eventually became fans.

**Q: Who are your influences for painting and writing poetry?**

## BP

Arthur Rimbaud – utter rebellion. His life and art were the templates for Modernism, embodying both its strengths and weaknesses. He was also a young Punk 100 years ahead of his time. As a twenty-year-old beginning poet, he just spoke to me. I started trying to write poems inspired by 'The Drunken Boat' - came nowhere near it of course, but in the attempt kind of made my own thing.

Vincent Van Gogh – I guess that was predictable? But when I was a teenager, like Rimbaud, he spoke to me. He and Rimbaud: outsiders, rebellious, committed to their visions, fond of extremes. Especially when I was young, it's what I wanted.



Filmworks

Brian Purcell



Still Life with Maroon and Yellow Vase by Brian Purcell

Of course there are many, many others in poetry and art. I had an art residency in Norway six months ago, and it allowed me to fulfill a long-term dream to see the Munch Museum in Oslo - and swim in a fjord!.

**Q: What are your techniques for creating your paintings?**

**BP**

Although I'm not an abstract painter, I often think of Jackson Pollock's words about immersing himself in a work and eventually finding out what he's about. For landscapes, I often visit and explore a coastal national park near where I live. It features eucalypt trees rising from rivers and streams, many birds and animals like koalas, echidnas and goannas. Walk a bit further and there is an untouched beach, usually uninhabited for as far as you can see. Sometimes I sketch, take photos – but I also feel the land in my blood, just like our aboriginal people did and do. The land is always with me in my studio.

**Q: What do you think Pop culture will look like in ten years?**

**BP**

That's hard to say – with the rapid advances in AI. I do wonder though, I always thought technological progress would mean that we could avoid the drudgery of repetitive work, so we'd be free to create art. But now it seems that AI is doing a lot of the art making, writing our essays, editing our books. I'm not interested in that! I remain a contented dinosaur, but I suspect I'm in a minority. Anyway, it will be interesting to see what happens!

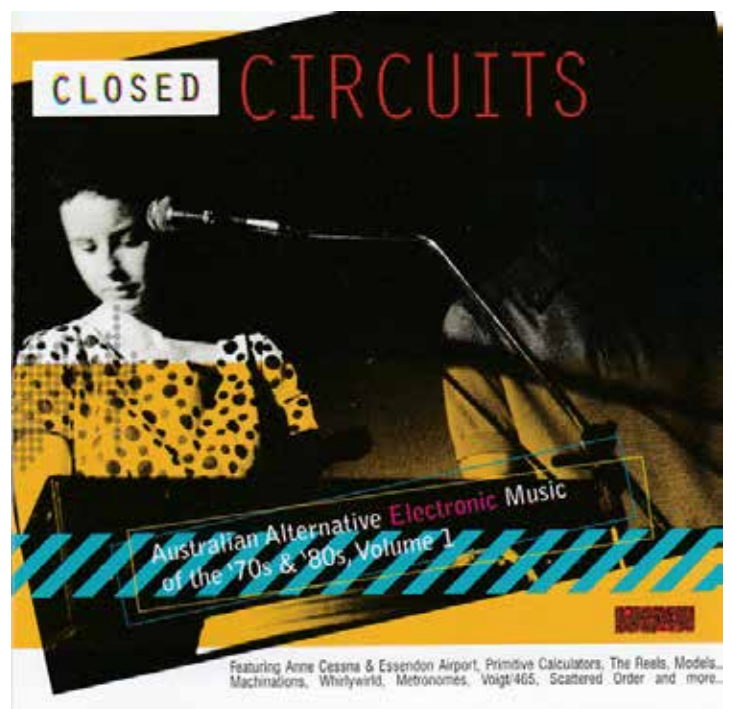
**Q: Do you have any crazy band stories? Life**

**on the road, recording? Dealing with record company execs?**

**BP**

There are many, many stories – it's not surprising, playing live in a rock band for ten years! I've actually written a novel about my experience with the band overseas – going from living in a filthy basement in sub-zero Amsterdam, to playing in amphitheatres in Florence and Berlin – within the space of weeks. At one stage I felt like I was living in a novel, so I eventually wrote one based on those experiences. Anyone interested in publishing it?

But perhaps the wildest thing that happened to me was on one normal gig night in Sydney, maybe a year before we left for Europe. It was one of our regular, smallish inner-city hotel gigs. We were about to go on when a whisper started amongst friends – David Bowie's here! Of course, I thought it was a joke – but I soon found out it wasn't. People were clustered around him at the bar – he was a short but well-formed man



*I would like to thank*

SUBLIME  
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*All that's precious and unique*

If you look really hard

**INTO THE TWILIGHT**

*It's ready when you are.*



in a powder-blue suit – while we nervously set up our instruments. What would he think of our band? He sat down on the carpeted steps close to the stage as we started. I was extremely relieved at the end of the songs, as I saw him smiling and clapping his hands above his head. At the end of the gig I said to the other band members, ‘Did you see that? He actually liked us – let’s go and talk to him!’

The bass player folded his arms. ‘Why would I want to talk to that has-been?’

I stared at him like he’d just confessed to murdering his parents. Though there is one thing to remember here – at the end of the eighties, Bowie’s reputation

amongst former fans had dropped after his incursion into and embrace of the mainstream. That ‘Let’s Dance’ period paled in comparison with his interesting work of the seventies and the Berlin trilogy.

‘But – it’s David Bowie!’ I replied. ‘Maybe he can do something for us?’

‘No-one’s going to help us, Brian – we have to help ourselves – and that’s why we’re going to Europe.’

‘Well, I’m going to talk to him anyway.’ He and the keyboardist struck their most rebellious poses and regarded me darkly as I walked towards Bowie.



Cockatoo at Bongi (op) and Bongil Estuary  
at Sunset by Brian Purcell

my fellow wage slaves all over the World. Thanks Tony & Christine, Pariala Karol,

Andrew for mixing, micky for slides, Trisha, Georgina, and

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P. 12" 1/2 LOVELY INFESTATION  
J. through CCCP - phone  
liney 211 025 0. 162  
Sydney Hills 2010 Sydney  
Australia



Distant Locust at Radio Roma

DISTANT LOCUST



TOP OF THE WORLD

Though I was nervous, our conversation was pleasant, and he said that he liked a lot of what our band was doing. The thing that we now understand about Bowie, is that he was a real fan of music, and if someone was doing something a bit different, he appreciated it. Maybe that's part of what makes his work so – magical.

Nothing much happened on the night after that, apart from Bowie fashioning outrageous stories to the reporters that flocked to the hotel. I do sometimes wonder if my bandmates later regretted their 'no talking' stance.

**Q: What advice would you give to anyone starting out as a creator of music, art or writing?**

**BP**

If you have a passion for working creatively, follow it.

If you want to know something, research and investigate it. Make the knowledge, craft and practice your own – and be resilient!

Leave space in your life for astonishment. You might be just doing your creative things when David Bowie walks into your gig and gives you a nod.

Life can be astonishing!

**Q: What's next for you, Brian?**

**BP**

I have a sullen poet friend who sometimes tries online dating. A common question he's asked is, 'where

do you see yourself in five years' time?' He always replies, 'dead'.

Yet I have a glass-half-full philosophy, and always have. I remember when I was a kid and there'd often be movies or stuff on TV where people would say, 'oh I should've kept painting...kept playing music... followed my passion...' even then I said to myself 'that's not going to be me.' And it wasn't me. I sold all my worldly goods to get overseas with the band. Shivered in a Dutch basement, sang gladly to thousands in Italy – and yeah, maybe it could've gone better – but it was REAL, it was something.

I've experienced amazing things; and I've received so much pleasure from being involved in art, poetry and music – both my own and other people's. Yes, I've worked in mind-numbing positions to support myself and my family. These days I wonder if it would have been better to starve or stay hungry, just working at my art. I may have gone a lot further – or I might have died young – you just never know. I have regrets, but then greedily open a notebook or pour paint onto a palette and wonder, 'What's next?'



# DISTANT LOCUST

## GATES OF PARADISE

### Distant Locust

Beyond the crystal on the mantelpiece  
there lies a gilded crown of thorns.

Something lies crushed on the living room floor –  
but even it survives.

Nothing happens  
but the shadows suddenly appear.

Stars – are my mother's closing eyes.  
Even a man who is crushed, even crushed –  
he will survive.

I'm going to Prague to turn into a cockroach  
nourished so long on the bed of my family's fears.  
I'm going to walk into oncoming traffic  
in my hands I cup the future's tears.

I've been fifteen years from my hell ascending –  
only now I'm beginning to see the light.

Stars – are my mother's closing eyes.  
Even if you are crushed,  
even if you are crushed  
you will survive.

You  
with  
If yo  
Try l  
For a  
will  
Leave

Terry Collins

They caught him with knives to make him a martyr  
a man called Terry Collins - for no reason at all.  
He was just leaving his wife's funeral,  
when they conveyed the stigmata  
- for you know everyone has to suffer alone.

All you want to do is to break him,  
tailor the violence to shake him.  
Before they cut him down he was unknown  
straight from the argument of the streets,  
the sparks stroked his cheeks  
then he knew

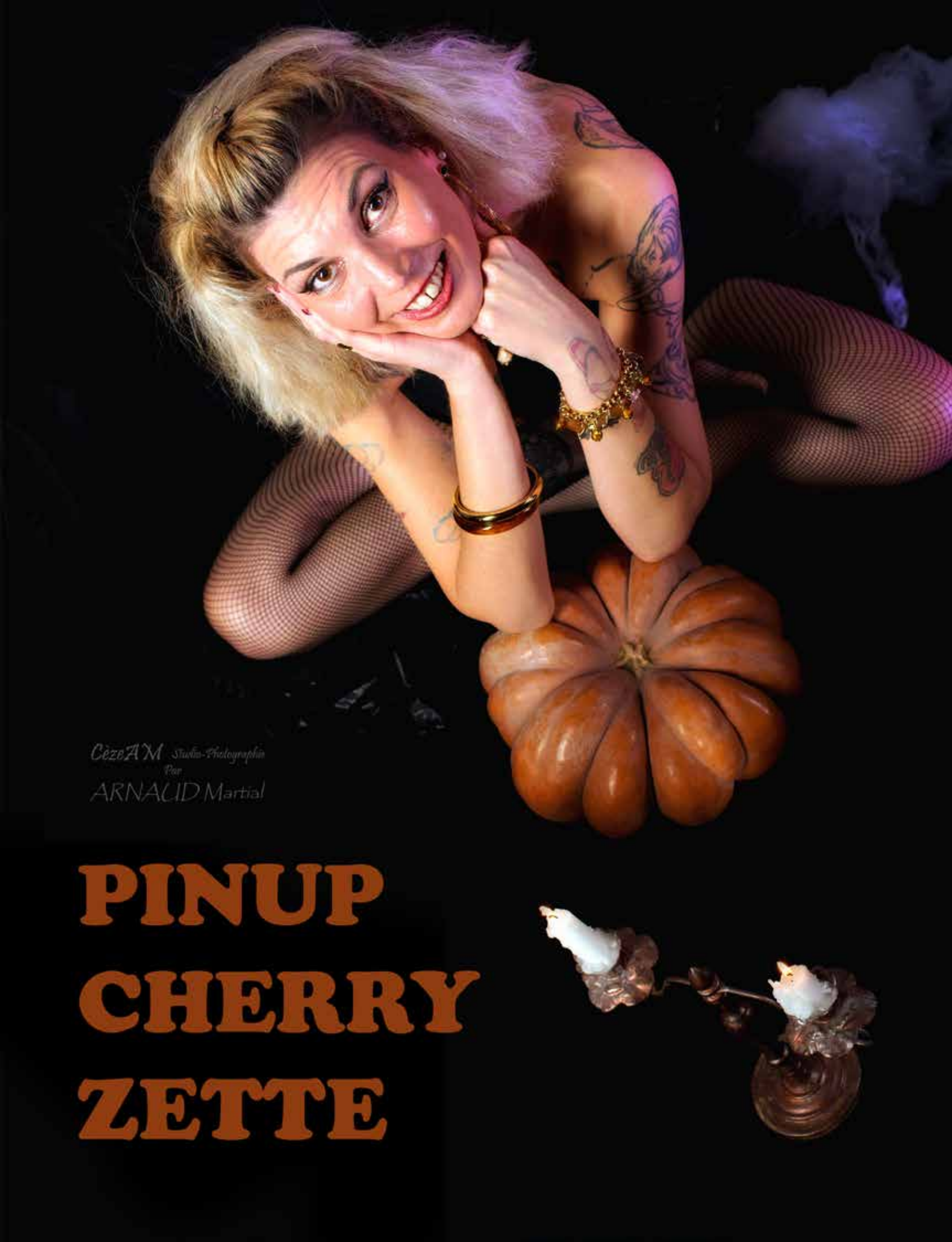
The pain of Christ, of innocence  
cut down for someone else's lust.  
These dried bloodstains -  
you know when Fortune smiles it usually turns away.  
You need no excuse for the vendettas of your ignorance  
with revenge in your guts,  
the blood will flow from innocence

from Terry Collins,  
from Terry Collins.  
You need no excuse for the vendettas of your ignorance  
with revenge in your guts, the blood will flow  
from innocence

You need some secret hiding place  
living in a dead man's face,  
all the dogs of death  
overdose on death

Terry Collins, leave Terry Collins  
to suffer alone.





*CézoAM Studio-Photographie*  
Par  
*ARNAUD Martial*

# **PINUP CHERRY ZETTE**

# Ten Questions with Cherry Zette: Pin-Up, Passion, and Provocation

The Twisted Pulp favorite opens up about her modeling journey, artistic influences, and the playful power behind her work.

**It's a little strange that it has been about three or four years you have been a part of the Screaming Eye Press/Twisted Pulp family. How do you feel about the work you have done for us?**

I loved the projects offered by the magazine. As a French woman, it was a huge honor to have been able to export my photos to the United States. I had the privilege of having done several covers and having an entire magazine with photos and interviews.

**For the sake of new readers, tell us where you are from? What is your background?**

I come from the south of France, I started as a photo model 20 years ago on the French Riviera, since then I have continued with many projects, I have always been a pin-up, but I like to diversify in my photos.

**What has led you to become a model and why is that your particular interest in that type of Art?**

I was lucky enough to be spotted because of my height and face; being a model came naturally. I danced for a long time, and I still love it; in fact, I've taken up salsa again.

**What performers or artists/writers inspires you the most?**

As a French woman, I am obviously a fan of Brigitte Bardot but also Betty Page; as for writers, I like a bit of everything, but Stephen King remains my winner.

**What other areas of art are you involved in?**

Photo projects, dance, and of course vintage fashion.

**When you first started modeling did you think it would be so much fun?**

For me, photos are a way to stage myself and express all my personalities; I like to have fun, and projects allow me to express my creativity.



**What long term goals do you have?**

I live day to day; I still have some shooting in preparation, and I am participating in a pinup gathering at the end of February for an association that takes care of abandoned animals.

**What do you think popular culture will be like in ten years? Especially modeling and fashion?**

To be honest, I don't really know, I hope it will be colorful and graphic.

**What's the strangest thing you've been asked to do in your profession?**

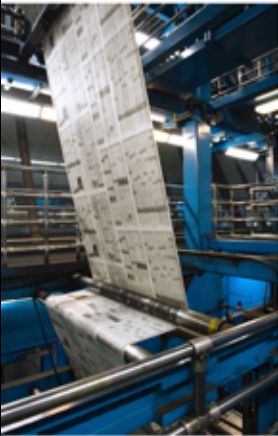
So far, I haven't had any extravagant or pornographic proposals 🤪 that said I would like to do a zombie horror shoot for example.

**What projects are you working on now?**

I have two ongoing projects with two photographers, and I just finished one in a rebellious way with a BMW motorcycle.



**UNFIT TO PRINT**  
A MODERN MEDIA SATIRE  
BY  
G. WAYNE MILLER



The last press run?

THE LATEST FROM  
**G. WAYNE MILLER**

"A witty, zany and outrageously effective take on the state of print journalism today. A tale that's one part cautionary tale and two parts laugh out loud, sidesplitting fun." – Jon Land, New York Times and USA Today bestselling author

"Unfit to Print is easily the best Miller book so far and I've read more than a few of this author's works." – Padma Venkatraman, award-winning author of The Bridge Home and Born Behind Bars





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CONVERSATIONS  
WITH  
STEELE

KENNETH  
GALLANT



*[Handwritten signature]*  
2006

On the eve of a technological revolution, a journalist sits down with a man who claims to be something far older, and far more dangerous. What begins as an eccentric interview spirals into a disturbing confession of obsession, addiction, and blood-soaked desire.

# CONVERSATIONS WITH STEELE

*The following interview was conducted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November with fond remembrance for two reasons. Firstly, it was on the eve of XBOX's much trumpeted release and secondly, I was about to sit next to a man who claimed he was a vampire. The gist of our conversation is transcribed here, so judge for yourself.*

## FIRST CONVERSATION - GROWING UP WITH JAMIE SUMMERS

THE ADVOCATE: First of all, I wanted to thank you for granting me an interview on the eve of such a momentous occasion.

STEELE: Yeah, no problem.

THE ADVOCATE: Just for the record, we are in New York.

STEELE: Lower Manhattan.

THE ADVOCATE: That's right and we're here at a

café across the street from Club Cube.

STEELE: You're here to take in the launch party of Microsoft's Xbox, aren't you?

THE ADVOCATE: Yep!

STEELE: Gamer?

THE ADVOCATE: Occasionally, but it's just a coincidence that I'm scheduled to interview you on the same day of the launch party. I'm really killing two birds with one stone here by interviewing you a day earlier, so let's just get down to it. Ok.

STEELE: Fine.

THE ADVOCATE: Great. I'd like to start out by asking a little bit about you.

STEELE: Like what?

THE ADVOCATE: Well for starters, how did you become a vampire?

STEELE: Killer question.

THE ADVOCATE: I know.

STEELE: Alright...it's a long story really, but it happened years ago. I forget when it was, maybe the mid 70's and possibly around the time when I was into watching the Bionic Woman. Have you ever heard of the show?

THE ADVOCATE: Yeah. Kinda retro right now, but I hear a movie is in the works. Kevin Smith is supposed to direct.

STEELE: Cool. Anyway, as I was sayin'...I loved the

whole bionics concept and Jamie Summers was too strong to have a boyfriend, so she tore up phone books in front of them, made them horny, and led them on. In the original episode, she died from a reaction to the bionics, and this provided Lee Majors with a pensive and memorable moment: Steve Austin leaves the hospital, stares off into space, and has slomo footage of Jamie superimposed over his face, while in voice-over he sings something like, “oh Jaime, I love-a-you...” It was so horrid that my sister and I would sing it to each other for years to come whenever we wanted to annoy one another.

THE ADVOCATE: [laughing] I know what ya mean. I hate my sister too...but go on.

STEEL: My favorite episode by far was the fem-bot one! These lovely, bionic wannabes were no match for the power of Jamie Summers! I loved how she freaked out after she tore their faces off.

THE ADVOCATE: Right on! I think that’s every gay boy’s fantasy...at least it’s one of mine. So, what does this have to do with you being a vampire?

STEEL: Nothing really, except that it illustrates my frame of mind at the time.

THE ADVOCATE: Which is?

STEEL: Perversion...I had these thoughts in my head about my sister. She was a few years older than me and was developing very nicely, and all I could think of was seeing her naked. I was thinking about being Steve Austin and how it felt to have a robotic playmate to do as I wished, especially sexually.

THE ADVOCATE: That is perverse. Did you act on any of these impulses?

STEEL: Not with her. In fact, a few years latter she went off to college and then moved to Canada right after graduation. I haven’t heard from her in years, and I think she’s shacked up with a draft dodger from Vietnam.

THE ADVOCATE: Ok. So now that we’ve established your psychosis, how did it stem from there?

STEEL: From there I moved on and grew up, but those thoughts never left me. I kept them a secret and in the back of my head, where I fostered them for so long. In the late 70’s I was old enough to date and I had a string of girlfriends by the early 80’s as long as my arm.

THE ADVOCATE: Wow!

STEEL: Yeah, I was cool...a pre-Don Johnson-Miami Vice kinda slickness that brought me a gratuitous stream of women.

THE ADVOCATE: [Laughing] Ever consider a career in porn?

STEEL: Funny you mention that. I did a brief stint in a flick once...but that was only after being coerced into it doing it.

THE ADVOCATE: Oh yeah...by whom?

STEEL: By...

*At this point the narrative is interrupted by the sudden appearance of a woman entering the cafe. Steel has sworn to have allegiances with her in the past, and when I asked him to elaborate, he simply refused comment. The woman totally ignored Steel and took a seat in the back, well away from us. Afterwards, he calmed down enough for the interview to continue.*

## SECOND CONVERSATION - T & A AND R-RATED MOVIES

THE ADVOCATE: Now as you were saying.

STEEL: Yes, I was about to say that I filmed a porn scene for a movie back in '83. I forget what it was called...I think it may have been "Caught from Behind" or something like that. Virtually all the scenes had anal sex in them, and the director was so proud because this movie was the first of its kind...an all-out anal extravaganza, and he thought he was breaking new ground.

THE ADVOCATE: But he wasn't.

STEEL: Not really. [he pauses] Anyhow, I knew Patty Hunt and she did some work in the past but was still mulling around the scene actin' like she was the biggest slut on high heels. The trouble with her was that she was reckless, and this attitude turned a lot of directors off of her. She couldn't find work and one night I met up with her in a bar. She liked my looks and thought I was perfect for the business, so she vowed to make every director notice me, no matter who it was.

THE ADVOCATE: You mean porn directors?

STEEL: Of course. The legit ones wouldn't come near us, so Patty hounded everyone she knew who shot X-rated stuff.

THE ADVOCATE: So, did you get much interest?

STEEL: Lots, only once they discovered Patty was vouching for me, the offers were quickly rescinded. I didn't understand why at first, but I found out about the rumours surrounding Patty's dark side.

THE ADVOCATE: Oh really?

STEEL: Yes, and she did a damn good job of covering it up from me...but the others all knew different. [ he pauses again] Patty was a vampire and as far as I knew the only one of her kind.

THE ADVOCATE: To your knowledge.

STEEL: Yes, to my knowledge. She doesn't have recollection of how she came to be, and I think it really doesn't matter now, but she had difficulty controlling her desire to drink blood. In the beginning it seemed fine, but after doing porn, drugs and whatever else she got into, that control was slowly slipping from her grasp. The more men she slept with, the more her urges for blood doubled, eventually accumulating into a hunger she just couldn't stave off any longer. So, when I came along, she latched onto me for dear life.

THE ADVOCATE: Was she the one? I mean did she turn you into a vampire?

STEEL: Yes, and in me she found the perfect companion. One she learned to trust and commit to solely, body and soul.

THE ADVOCATE: So, in other words you found your bionic woman.

STEEL: For sure and we both entered a relationship that took many turns into perversity. Sometimes it was morose, other times it was painful, but we both took from each other what we could. It's what vampires do best: we take and take and take to sustain ourselves, never really giving anything back in return. This is how Patty and I functioned for much of the 80's and early 90's.

THE ADVOCATE: Well, speaking of functioning, I think it's time for more caffeine. Care for a latte?

STEEL: No thanks.

*At this point, the interview is stopped for a coffee break. Ten minutes later I return to the table catching Steel in a pensive moment. He seems withdrawn, so I ask him about it.*

*The interview continues.*

### **THIRD CONVERSATION - MEGALOPSYCHOI AND BEYOND**

THE ADVOCATE: You seem withdrawn. Anything wrong?

STEEL: It's nothing.

THE ADVOCATE: Are you sure?

STEEL: Positive.

THE ADVOCATE: Ok. You were talking about your relationship with Patty, and how painful and morose it was. Can you elaborate on this?

STEEL: Well for starters, Patty was very grateful that she met me. She liked guys who could control any situation and I was able to do this for her. She was a vampire, and I came along and turned the tables around, allowing her to revel in her condition instead of hiding it. I gave her back the control she had lost, and in return she gave me the type of affection I longed for but kept secret for so many years.

THE ADVOCATE: Which was?

STEEL: Pain.

THE ADVOCATE: But I thought you said it was perversity that you kept secret?

STEEL: Well, it was, but our relationship developed into a painful one, especially these last few years.

THE ADVOCATE: You were both misogynists?

STEEL: Yes, and what began as a thought about my sister truly blossomed into a powerful situation for Patty and myself. We literally sucked each other dry until it became apparent that we needed to expand our horizons.

THE ADVOCATE: I assume you are referring to the Internet site you guys developed.

STEEL: Megalopsychoi.

THE ADVOCATE: Mega what?

STEEL: Megalopsychoi. It was the name I gave the concept long before it became a reality.

THE ADVOCATE: I see.

STEEL: Several years ago, I was reading a lot about philosophy, and I came across a fellow named Isaiah Berlin. He's a current Philosopher and leading proponent of liberal thinking whose intellectual and political views had such impact on me at the time.

THE ADVOCATE: Really? I never heard of him.

STEEL: Well, it's pretty dense stuff, hardly the material for pop cultural consumption.

THE ADVOCATE: I bet.

STEEL: Anyhow, he talked a lot about Thomas Hobbes, a monist thinker who held many views about living in the modern world. It was his view that touched me the most. He was of the opinion, when a man becomes uncontrollable, he must voluntarily put on a straight jacket. That way when he goes mad, he will be protected by it.

THE ADVOCATE: Interesting.

STEEL: Huh huh.

THE ADVOCATE: It's like an alarm clock, which you put on in case you fail to wake yourself.

STEEL: Very good analogy.

THE ADVOCATE: Thank you. [I pause] So how did Megalopsychoi truly take shape, aside from beginning as a philosophical point of view?

STEEL: Well, Patty and I were really getting out of control, giving into lust, desire and perversion. We knew we needed to expand and invite others into the fold, so we took out personal ads for other single women. At first it was all fairly innocent three-way sex, but eventually it got kinky. Before long we had half a dozen women all condemned to a half life, existing as vampire slaves for our own personal amusement.

THE ADVOCATE: Incredible!

STEEL: Yeah, and it was getting out of control. So, thinking about what Hobbes had thought about personal restraint, I put Megalopsychoi into reality, and started a website that would allow us to grow upon our excesses in the cyber world, but limit our interaction in the real world. That way we could avoid the risk of converting others into vampires

and continue indulging our preferences at the same time. Along with Patty and myself, we had six girls who were now vampires also, and eight is more than enough to garner undue attention.

THE ADVOCATE: What is the name of your site?

STEEL: The Emblem of Fetish.

THE ADVOCATE: Oh yeah, I've heard of it. A few friends of mine have surfed it a couple of times.

STEEL: What did they think of it?

THE ADVOCATE: They thought it was pretty trashy stuff, though heavy on the goth.

STEEL: Well in the beginning I wanted the site to have a certain feel to it. I was obsessed with images of Auschwitz, and my favourite novel at the time was 'I am Legend', so a lot of those earlier influences went into the creation of the site itself. We also gave all the girls names and displayed their characteristics and habitual fetishes up for those looking for something specific. Afterwards, we set up webcams and email addresses for each girl, so if you wanted a particular girl, then we would get your credit card information and proceed to hook you up with her.

THE ADVOCATE: So, you were a pimp too?

STEEL: In a way yes, but I picture myself as the arranger, and the girls refer to me always as master, never anything else. We are the Emblem of Fetish and operate as an Internet vampire service...and believe me...you'll pay through your teeth, pardon the pun though. [he laughs]

*At this juncture the interview is stopped once more. I look at Steel seriously, wondering how much truth*

*there is to his story. He returns my stare, and in the glint of his eye I can see a hint of something sinister in there. For a moment we're both eclipsed by the silence, and then I hesitantly start up the interview again.*

## **FOURTH CONVERSATION - BILL GATES & FUTURE ENDEAVORS**

THE ADVOCATE: So...

STEEL: So.

THE ADVOCATE: Yeah, um...so why did you pick our magazine?

STEEL: I thought we might have something in common.

THE ADVOCATE: In what way?

STEEL: Well, the Advocate is a Gay and Lesbian magazine dedicated to homosexual lifestyles, and in most people's eyes, it's considered sexual deviancy. Some might call me and my entourage deviants as well, since we pursue perversity, and thrive for existence in a world that shuns vampires. So, I believe we share something in common here.

THE ADVOCATE: Well first of all, I don't see myself as being deviant, nor am I into perversion. Our magazine exists to celebrate Gay and Lesbian culture, and possibly educate the straight community in the process. After all, we are people too and I am proud of who I am!

STEEL: Bravo. [clapping] Well said, but we are just as proud of who we are too. I've made my choice long ago, and now must plot out my next course of action.

THE ADVOCATE: And what might that be?

STEEL: New avenues. We have infiltrated the Internet, and I have a new venture on the go, and hopefully it will be fruitful for me and my sect.

THE ADVOCATE: Sect? So, does this mean you view yourself as a vampire cult leader?

STEEL: Sect is a very strong word to be using in a sentence and put into a certain context it could be viewed that way. I'm no more a cult leader than Bill Gates is to the flock of Microsoft users salivating at the chance to play with one of his computer games.

THE ADVOCATE: What does Bill Gates have to do with this?

STEEL: Plenty. In fact, he's the main target of the new avenue I am talking about.

THE ADVOCATE: You can't be serious.

STEEL: I am and tomorrow Xbox will launch 26 games in its initial start-up, with more to follow over the next several months. I plan to meet with Bill and discuss the possibility of creating a game around the concept of Megalopsychoi.

THE ADVOCATE: But if he refuses?

STEEL: Then I'll have to persuade him with some of my own special tactics. [he smiles, revealing fangs]

THE ADVOCATE: This is pretty heavy stuff you're laying on me. Actually, it's kinda chilling, now that I think about it. It might even rival the events of 911... although you're a different kind of terrorist.

STEEL: Terrorist? Well, that's a new one on me. I

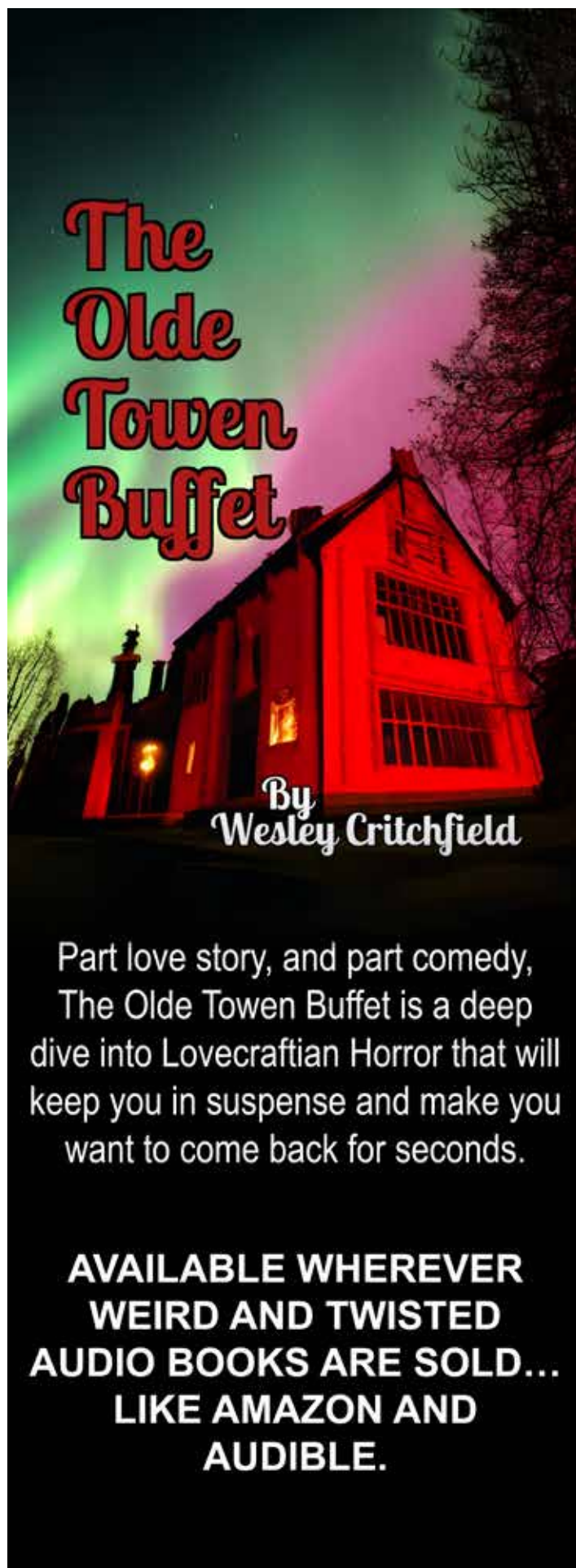
see myself as a man on the right path of salvation. The Emblem of Fetish is my body politic, and it must never be suppressed. We will thrive in your world, whether it be in the realm of cyberspace or in the form of a computer game...perversion shall always exist and in doing so, we will too.

THE ADVOCATE: I'm afraid this interview is getting too lurid for my blood; besides I don't think she approves.

STEEL: What do you mean?

*The interview grinds to a halt. The woman who Steel claimed to have past allegiances with bolted from her spot in the back of the café and headed straight for us. She had a determined look on her face that was cold and nondescript, much like Steel's. Perhaps she was an equalizer, here to stem the further flow of his rant from spilling out beyond the context of our interview. Before a confrontation came to fruition, Steel left the café without saying another word. I was shocked a bit, but still reeling over so much input. I didn't know how to accept this and more importantly expect my editor to print this interview.*

*As for the woman, she finally made it over to my table and claimed to be a representative of Bill Gates'. She asked me about Steel and what we talked about during the course of our interview, so I told her what I knew. She smiled and flashed me a set of fangs as well, and I was taken aback in a big way. But the kicker to this little exchange was when she said that Bill Gates was also exploring other avenues too. Go figure, life is sure strange.*





**WTF!**

**TOY PHOTOS OF FRANK LARNERD**





TO UNLATCH  
PULL BACK ON TAB  
TO UNLATCH THE TRUNK

HEMMING  
High Performance  
Automotive  
Accessories



# HARK!

The

# 87<sup>th</sup>

# Precinct Podcast



What starts as casual pub talk between friends becomes a six-year deep dive into one of crime fiction's most enduring series. Hark! The 87th Precinct Podcast follows three hosts as they read, analyze, and ultimately conquer all 55 books by Ed McBain

## Hark! The 87th Precinct Podcast: Six Years Inside Ed McBain's Crime Universe

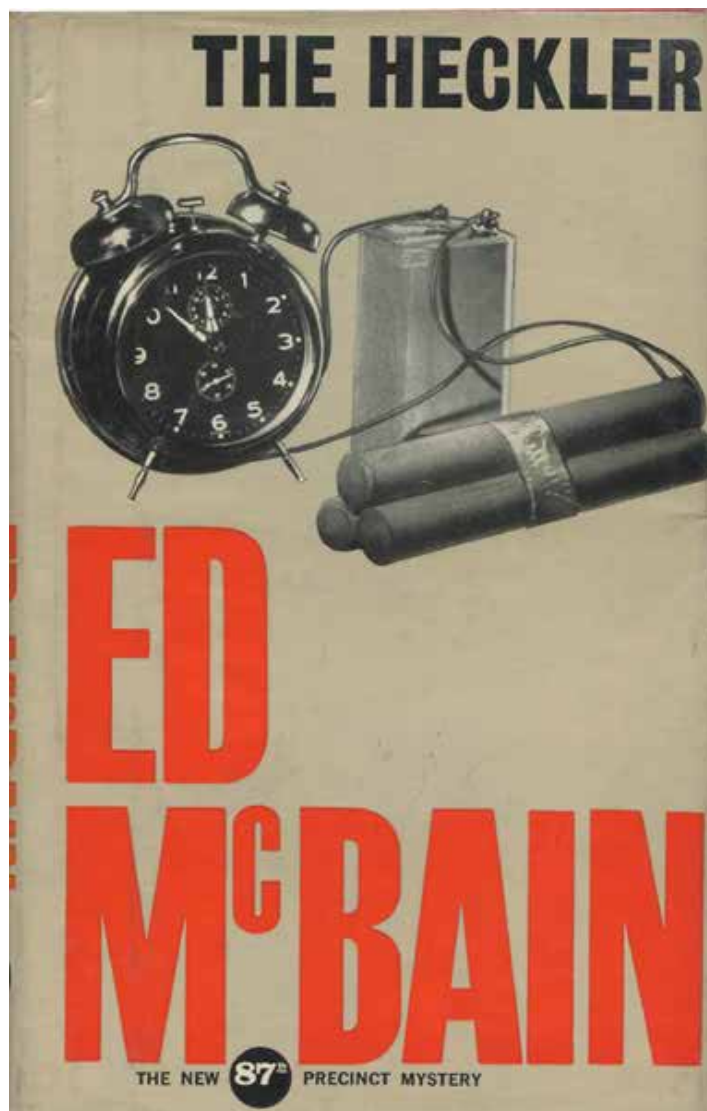
General note: *Hark! The 87th Precinct Podcast* began in 2016 and over nearly six years focused on the 87th Precinct books of Ed McBain, plus other works from the author and adaptations. Presented by Paul Abbott, with his friends Stephen Royston and Morgan Brown, the show is made in Liverpool, UK.

### When did you first discover Ed McBain/Evan Hunter?

I and my two co-presenters on Hark! The 87th Precinct podcast are old university friends and amongst the oft-repeated conversation topics we'd talk about in the pub was that of books. Stevo and Morgan were into crime fiction long before I got hooked and would often mention Ed McBain and the 87th Precinct. I filed away the information in my brain and eventually I came across one of these two-in-one republished editions of, I think, *The Heckler* and *See Them Die* (two very different types of stories) and as it only cost about £2, I took a chance. I never looked back, and the collecting started in earnest after that.

### What draws you to the 87th present books compared to other procedure or mystery books?

I think part of the initial draw for me was realising that it was a series I could collect – something I could hunt down in secondhand bookshops. And then, having sought out the books, I'd read them. Then, after all that, I could start to read them *in order* and that's an experience in and of itself. I'd read Sherlock Holmes, Agatha Christie stories, Raymond Chandler and the 87th Precinct series was something else entirely. It's such an addictive little closed world and you want to spend time with these characters as much as you want to enjoy the mysteries.



(In the photo above of its Morgan Brown (L), Paul Abbott (middle), Stephen Royston)



**Was it difficult to research Hunter/McBain and the books? Seems like you do a deep dive.**

At first, yes, but as we got going with the podcast, I discovered more and more sources of information online and luckily, I have access to a few newspaper archives which helped. Of course, McBain/Hunter had his own website. I came to these years after he died, but some of the chat archives were still online and there's quite a few interviews it's possible to find as well. I'm fairly sure now, as I carry on my research outside of the podcast, that I've been able to piece together more information than anyone else on earth would care about!

**Have you covered all the 87th books?**

Yup, all 55, including the Christmas short illustrated story and other such tidbits like *Reruns*, which featured in TV Guide and Love or Money, which was a short story created for a BBC Television crime-writing competition. We've also looked at adaptations on screen and in comics.

**Who do you consider is best screen adaptation of Steve Carella and how do you feel about the film version of Fuzz?**

Fuzz is fine, but it's not really an 87<sup>th</sup> Precinct film, despite it being scripted by Evan Hunter himself. The casting overwhelms the story, and it was a bit of a troubled production. Plus being set in Boston it loses the character of the city. No surprise that a planned sequel got dropped!

I love Robert Lansing as Carella in the NBC TV series – he's my favourite. In fact, a lot of adaptations don't have a character named Carella, because they've been made in Japan, France, India... some of them are a lot of fun but nothing like the Carella of the books.

If readers of this interview want an 87<sup>th</sup> Precinct film to hunt out that is lesser seen, but brilliant, then *Kō-fuku* (Lonely Heart) from Japan, 1981, makes great use of the story *Lady, lady, I Did It!*

**Would it be possible for a modern-day adaptation of the books, considering Hill Street Blues and NY PD Blue were close to McBain ideas for screen?**

I'd love to see one, but I can't imagine how it could be done without being a period piece – perhaps set in the 70s? I think you could make most books fit that setting. I don't see that there would be any reason to adapt the novels if you weren't going to make the

dynamics of the squad-room the main feature. It's true though that Hill Street Blues and its successors did that so brilliantly (much to McBain's annoyance) that it would make any 87<sup>th</sup> Precinct adaptation less impactful these days.

**If there was an adaptation, who do you think would be a good cast?**

We pondered on this across several episodes of the podcast, asking listeners to suggest ideas, but ended up tying ourselves in knots due to (a) everyone having totally different ideas and also a tendency to only think of classic TV and movie stars! Anything now would have to be in the hands of a very clever casting director. I don't think you necessarily have to have the exact mix – an Italian detective, a Jewish detective, a Black detective, an Irish detective. That's a bit old hat now, so I think as long as there is an interesting mix of types of people (and ideally a better gender spread) then that'd be the winning formula.

**Why do you think some critics were not as kind to McBain? Was it because he was a popular writer?**

McBain wrote for a long time and whilst his stories were always set in 'the now', I think they eventually were considered a little tired and, if not formulaic, so much their-own-thing that he didn't necessarily always seem to have contemporary appeal. That said, it was often down to who was doing the reviewing. In his early career, he had a champion in the reviews he got from Anthony Boucher in the New York Times *Criminals At Large* column, but when Harold C Schonberg took over, writing under the penname Newgate Callendar, the reviews for his books were suddenly awful! (In his review of *Long Time, No See*, Callendar said, "The idea is intriguing, the writing is wretched" for example).



**What was it, 54 books all together? Which one is your favorite, and which one do you think is the best as far as being a mystery novel?**

55 if you include *The Empty Hours* (3 stories in one book) and *And All Through The House*, the Christmas short story. We ranked the books on the podcast, so we have a definitive answer as far as that is concerned. The winner was 1987's *Tricks*, followed by *Ice* from 1983 and then *King's Ransom* from 1959. Ironically, of course, I don't think any of us would pick *Tricks* as our favourite, but that's the nature of how the podcast cookie crumbled. We do all love *Sadie When She Died*, and I've got a real soft spot for *Bread*. We're all pretty much agreed though that *The Frumious Bandersnatch* is the worst.

**If you had any plans for another show, would it be to cover another series of books and who would the writer be?**

Plans are afoot! We're not going to announce them just yet, but we're going to carry on (hopefully) with some additional McBain things – films, TV that we haven't covered, but we're also going to shift focus and do a special series about another run of books by another author. One day we might dip into the universe of Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse (in both his print and television guises) – but that would be a different podcast. We'll keep Hark! as the place to feature books from authors of roughly the same age and from roughly the same place as McBain and that's all the hint I'm going to give!



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# THE BITCH IS BACK



A quiet dinner in a small New Hampshire pub turns deadly when a professional killer's past catches up with him. What begins as a routine drive home spirals into a brutal game of survival in the dark woods, where vengeance walks on one leg and death waits behind every tree.

## THE BITCH IS BACK

By Tyson Blue

I had dropped in at my favorite eatery, the Water Horse Irish Pub in Franklin, New Hampshire, my mouth watering for a nice Friday Night Fish Fry, a staple of restaurants throughout the Northeast. It usually consisted of a fillet of beer-battered haddock, fried to a golden brown, with coleslaw and fries. A server came up to my table.

“Evening, Sir,” she said. “I have to tell you that, because of a problem with our deliveries today, we don’t have our fish fry. We didn’t get the fish in, so —“ she smiled and shrugged.

“You have the fry, but no fish?” I asked.

She nodded.

“Ayuh,” she said. “That’s about the size of it.”

I scanned the menu quickly.

“I’ll have the steak, then.”

Her brow wrinkled. With mock horror, she said, “Eat meat on a Friday?”

I smiled back.

“That’s all right,” I said.

She nodded and headed off to put in my order. She came back for my drink order, and soon came back with my Guinness, complete with a shamrock drawn in the foamy top.

While I waited for my meal, I took a minute to look around the room. I was looking for anyone I had seen before, or anyone who seemed particularly interested in me. Although I enjoyed coming here, I tried not to do it too often or with any regular time or day — it wasn’t a good idea to establish any habits that might make it easy to set up an ambush for me, which is, in my line of work, an all-to-likely scenario.

There were only a half-dozen couples seated in various parts of the room, none of whom were familiar, and all of them were talking quietly with each other, enjoying drinks or meals. No one seemed to be paying attention to me.

My meal arrived, and I dug in. It was up to the pub’s usual high standards, and I finished it, leaving nothing but a skim of grease and a few florets of broccoli on the platter. I paid for it in cash, including a hefty tip for the server, and headed out to my car, stopping to hold the door open for a young woman who was coming in. Night had fallen while I was inside. The street was deserted, no one appeared to be waiting for me, so I put the car in gear and headed up the street, taking my first right to head down to Central Street, and turned left to head toward my residence, an old hunting cabin set back in the woods along a barely-there one lane dirt road in Grafton, a little over a half-hour away.

After spending a lot of time operating out of central Georgia, I had decided that things had gotten a little hot for me down there, and had relocated to

New Hampshire for a new base of operations. I had chosen Grafton because it could best be described as “sparsely populated”. Just over 1,300 people lived there. Back in 2006, a group of libertarians had moved into the area and tried to set up a “Free Town”, where laws were minimal and local services, such as garbage pickup and snowplowing, were all but defunded. The local history of resistance to pay taxes went back to its founding in 1778. Zoning regulations were nonexistent, and at its height, many of the Free Towners had lived in a series of campsites in the woods, made up of campers, trailers, yurts and tents. Although most of them had long since left, I suspected that some of them were still, there, although I had never actually seen any of them.

Most of my neighbors had fur, claws and/or antlers. Deer were frequent visitors, as were raccoons and porcupines. Black bears were plentiful in the area, drawn to garbage and other food items, but for the most part, they kept to themselves around my place.

The cabin consisted of a single large room with a wood stove for heat and cooking, and a built-in bunk for sleeping. I read by window light during the day, and by a kerosene lantern at night. The facilities were the great outdoors. I carted in water from a convenience store out on the highway, where I could charge my laptop and check my Dark Web connection for potential jobs.

My name is Ray Vincent. I kill people for a living.

I drove the winding two-lane road, passing Newfound Lake on my right, and a few miles later drove by Proctor Academy, a staid old New England prep school in the small town of Andover. There wasn't much in the town except for the school, just a gas station and a few other places that mainly served the needs of the school and its students. There was

only one vehicle behind me, and it was quite a ways behind.

When I turned off the main road, dense pine woods closed in on both sides of the road. The headlights illuminated the road ahead, but not much else. The single-lane dirt trail that led back to my cabin was about five miles ahead. I'd be home soon.

Suddenly, a blaze of white light filled my back window and reflected blindingly from my rearview and side mirrors. An engine roared behind me and I was hit from behind by a much larger vehicle, my head flying back against the headrest. The vehicle behind me pushed me toward the side of the road, then dropped back and swerved around me, cutting me off. I popped my seatbelt and reached for the glove compartment, which contained my Colt Python .357 Magnum. I opened the driver's side door, which I had modified with an inner panel of heavy steel, and stepped out to see what this was all about.

In front of me was a heavy-duty pickup truck. It stood much higher off the road than my sedan, which explained why its headlights had shone directly through my back window, effectively blinding me. A light-bar across the top of the cab blared on, spotlighting me. I heard the driver's door open, but couldn't see it because of the severe angle at which the truck had pulled in to cut me off.

The driver walked around the back of the truck and stepped into the pool of light between the two vehicles. It was a woman, her dark hair cut shoulder length. It was the woman for whom I'd held the door at the pub as I was leaving.

So much for being polite.

She held a gun in her left hand. In the place of her right hand was a prosthetic. She walked toward me with an awkward, rolling gait. Her right leg was a

prosthetic, too.

“Remember me?” she asked. “Because I sure as shit remember you.”

It didn't come back to me right away, but her face was familiar. Then it came back to me.

A few months ago, I had been hired to take out a man named Henry Shaheen. He was a human trafficker who provided girls ranging from toddlers to teenagers for the Arabian sex-slave market. The father of one of his victims wanted him taken out, and hired me to do it. I had intercepted him at a container port in Boston as he was preparing to transfer a truckload of girls onto a freighter bound for the Middle East. I had taken out Shaheen at the scene, but the men with him had gotten away with the truck.

I followed them up into southern New Hampshire, where they had driven down a wood road to eliminate the girls. In the back of the truck with the girls was a young woman who had acted as Shaheen's groomer, luring the girls in and pretending to be one of them in order to keep them calm until the ship left port.

When I killed the men who had been driving the truck, she acted like she was grateful to me for saving her, and had almost convinced me that she would get them to safety. I was almost back on the road when I realized that she had known too much about the truck to not be in on the job, so I had gone back and found her about to kill the girls in the back of the truck. I had shot her in the wrist of her gun hand with a high-explosive round and then run her over with the truck to leave it for the police I had called. I didn't want to explain all that to them when they arrived.

At any rate, that woman was now standing in front of me with a gun in her remaining hand and a burning mad-on for me in her eyes.

“I thought you were dead,” I said.

“Not quite,” she said, with a tight smile. “You didn't run over my body, just my legs. You broke them, and I ended up losing my right one below the knee. I made a tourniquet from a phone-charger cable to keep from bleeding out from your shooting off my hand, and I called some of Shaheen's people to come and get me. They got me patched up, and I began working on trying to get you.”

“So, you tracked me down, did you?”

I had visions of her having somehow tracked me down on the Dark Web, and tracked me here, which — assuming I lived through the next few minutes — would mean that I would have to relocate and set myself up in business somewhere else. I really liked the setup I had here; for someone in my line of work, it was nearly perfect. But if I had been compromised, I'd have no choice.

“I didn't track you down,” she said. “I tried, but I don't know that much about finding hitmen online. No, I just recognized you tonight when you held the door for me as you were leaving the Water Horse. You didn't even recognize me, did you?”

“To tell the truth, I didn't even look at you. I was just being nice on my way out the door,” I told her.

“Throw your gun into the woods”, she said.

“Ain't gonna happen, kiddo,” I said, squatting down behind the armored door as I did so.

“I can still see your feet under the door,” she said.

“Good luck hitting a moving target that small shooting one-handed,” I said, then turned and ran

quickly around the back of my car and into the dense brush beside the road. I crashed through the litter of sticks, dead leaves and pine straw that littered the forest, trying to get as deep into the woods as I could before she came in after me.

She fired two shots after me, and one came close enough that I heard it whiz by me as it passed harmlessly into the woods, clipping off branches as it went. The sound of the shots rolled around in the night. If there had been anyone around to hear, they would most likely not have given it much thought. Gunshots in the woods in Grafton were not uncommon at any hour of the day or night. Most residents respected their neighbors' privacy, not to mention their right to bear — and use — firearms as they saw fit.

The lights from the pickup lit up the woods some, but I was dressed in dark clothes, and the farther I got into the trees, the harder I'd be to see. If she moved the truck to aim directly into the woods, it would light things up much better, but that's not what she did. She was coming after me. It was going to be hard going with one leg and one hand, and that hand holding a gun. But that's what she was doing.

As I moved deeper into the woods, I ran strategies through my head to give me the best advantage I could get. I thought about trying to climb a tree and get the drop on her as she went by. But many of the trees around me were fairly young pines and were not sturdy enough to support me. There were some hardwood trees that were older, but their lost branches were too high for me to get a grip and get up into them.

My best bet was to keep moving deeper into the woods, away from the light, and to find a good position to ambush her. The hardest part was trying to avoid making any noise, given all the litter on the ground, leaves that would crackle or rustle, and sticks

that would snap loudly when stepped on.

Pausing for a moment, I looked back toward the road. I could see her silhouetted against the light from the truck. She was about fifty or sixty feet back, making her way slowly through the trees, trying to avoid limbs or potential obstacles on the ground. I was confident that she couldn't see me against the black backdrop of the woods, and kept going, trying to be as quiet as possible.

As she stood there, I saw her put the gun under her arm and reach up with her hand toward the baseball cap on her head. A beam of light came on above her eyes. She was wearing a headlamp. It wouldn't be strong enough to pick me out, but it might help her to avoid anything that might trip her up. Taking the gun back in her hand, she began tramping deeper into the woods.

I moved into an area that was mostly pine, which was good. The ground was coated with pine straw, which muffled my footsteps and offered fewer sticks or leaves. I was able to move faster through here, deeper into the woods.

A few hundred feet further, I came to a small open space, like a meadow. I went across it as quickly and quietly as I could, moving cross ways to my left to take a different path in hopes of throwing the woman off. There was a light breeze, moving the grass, a soft, rustling susurrus that helped to cover any sound I might have made.

Behind me, the sharp crack of a gunshot rang out. I didn't hear the sound of a bullet coming near me, so she must have fired at something else; or she may have just been guessing, or trying to make me nervous. But all I was doing was keeping track of the shots. I counted three. I was also trying to remember whether she was carrying a pistol or a revolver, whether she

had three shots left, or however many were left in the clip. I wished I had made sure of that before I ran off, but it was too late now.

As I reached the far edge of the meadow and prepared to go back into the woods, I heard a rustling of branches and the crackle of crushed leaves coming from the brush ahead of me. Thinking that she might have somehow circled around me, I made my way to the trunk of a tall maple and did my best to blend into the shape of its trunk. I breathed as quietly as I could, my mouth wide open.

As I stood there, a few yards away, with a great cacophony of breaking twigs and snapping branches, I made out a huge shape emerging from the woods. A huge head, topped by an enormous rack of antlers, came first, atop a body whose shoulders were higher than my head, supported on improbably spindly legs. It was a bull moose.

“Holy shit,” I breathed.

As I stood there, the moose rocked its great head, shaking loose branches that had tangled in its antlers as it made its way through the forest. Then it bent down and began to eat the vegetation growing in the meadow. I stood frozen by the tree, not wanting to startle the moose. I didn’t know if they were aggressive or not — this one seemed to be fairly sedate, but I didn’t want to find out I was wrong.

Finally, the moose raised its head and began slowly walking across the meadow, headed for the woods on the other side. The woman had had plenty of time to close the distance with me, and I had to make up for lost time. I eased around the tree as quietly as I could, then moved as slowly into the woods.

The ground sloped down into a small gully. A tiny stream made its way through the lowest point, and I stepped across it easily, not wanting to get my feet

wet and have fallen leaves stick to the soles and create a risk of noise as I walked.

On the other side of the stream, the ground began sloping upward. I had just reached the beginning of the slope up when a voice spoke behind me.

“Hold it right there,” the woman said. A light blazed out from the other side of the stream. It seemed blinding, since my eyes had gotten used to the darkness, and my pupils were probably fully dilated.

I was caught in the light from her cap, almost as if I had been hit with a Super Trooper spotlight in the middle of a stage.

“I’ve got you now”, she said, taking a step toward me. A stick cracked loudly under her foot. I backed up a step. She came forward quickly, and stumbled over something on the ground. The something moved, emitting a mewling, almost childlike sound. I saw a small, furry black shape on the ground. At the same time, she went to her knees, keeping her hold on the gun. I squinted at the shape on the ground, and I felt a watery quiver of fear in my groin as I realized what it was.

It was a black bear cub.

“Oh, shit,” I whispered, and before I could move, a terrible roar shredded the night behind me, and I was hit below the knees by a great shape that sent me sprawling onto my back as the bear’s mother brushed past me and headed for the woman who had frightened her cub. She knelt on the ground, looking up at the beast, who had reared up onto her hind legs to loom over her. The gun in her hand was forgotten as she stared wide-eyed at the force of nature that had appeared before her, her mouth hanging open. As the bear raised one of its huge paws, I scrambled to my feet and began to run past her, headed back toward the road as fast as I could. As I ran, I heard a scream,

abruptly cut off in mid-shriek, a snapping, ripping sound, and an object came flying past me, a beam of light trailing from it like the tail of a comet. It was the woman's head, knocked from her shoulders by a single swipe of the bear's paw.

She was dead now, I thought, that was for damn sure.

There were other sounds as the bear continued to maul her victim, which gave me time to put more distance between us. My Python could split an engine block, but I wasn't interested in seeing how much stopping power it had against a mama bear in a full protective frenzy.

I came out onto the road and made my way to my car, the driver's side door still hanging open. I looked at the back. The damage was mostly cosmetic; both taillights were still working. I walked over to the front of the truck. It was outfitted with a push-bar, one of those cowcatcher things you see on the front of police cars, so they can push disabled vehicles without damaging the grill. That was why most of the damage to the car was in the center.

I went back to my car and got a pair of nitrile gloves out of the center console and pulled them on. Closing the door, I climbed into the pickup and put it in gear and drove it back the way we had come, taking it farther away from the road leading to my place, and lessening the chance that anyone would make any connection between the truck and me, or between the truck and the location of its missing driver. I drove it down an old, abandoned logging road that didn't have any homes built up along it (although who knows who might have been living off the grid back in the woods) and left it there. I locked the keys inside, and walked back to the main road, peeling off the gloves and stuffing them into my back pocket as I went.

Then, I began trotting back to my car, hoping I wouldn't run into the bear along the way, or any other bears. Or a moose. Or anything or *anyone*, else, for that matter. I reached my car without any further incident and drove on down the highway, turning off down the road that led to my cabin. It looked as though the whole thing had been a coincidence; the two of us had just seen each other in passing, which meant that I hadn't been found out, and that I could stay where I was for now. Which suited me fine.

I liked my little cabin.



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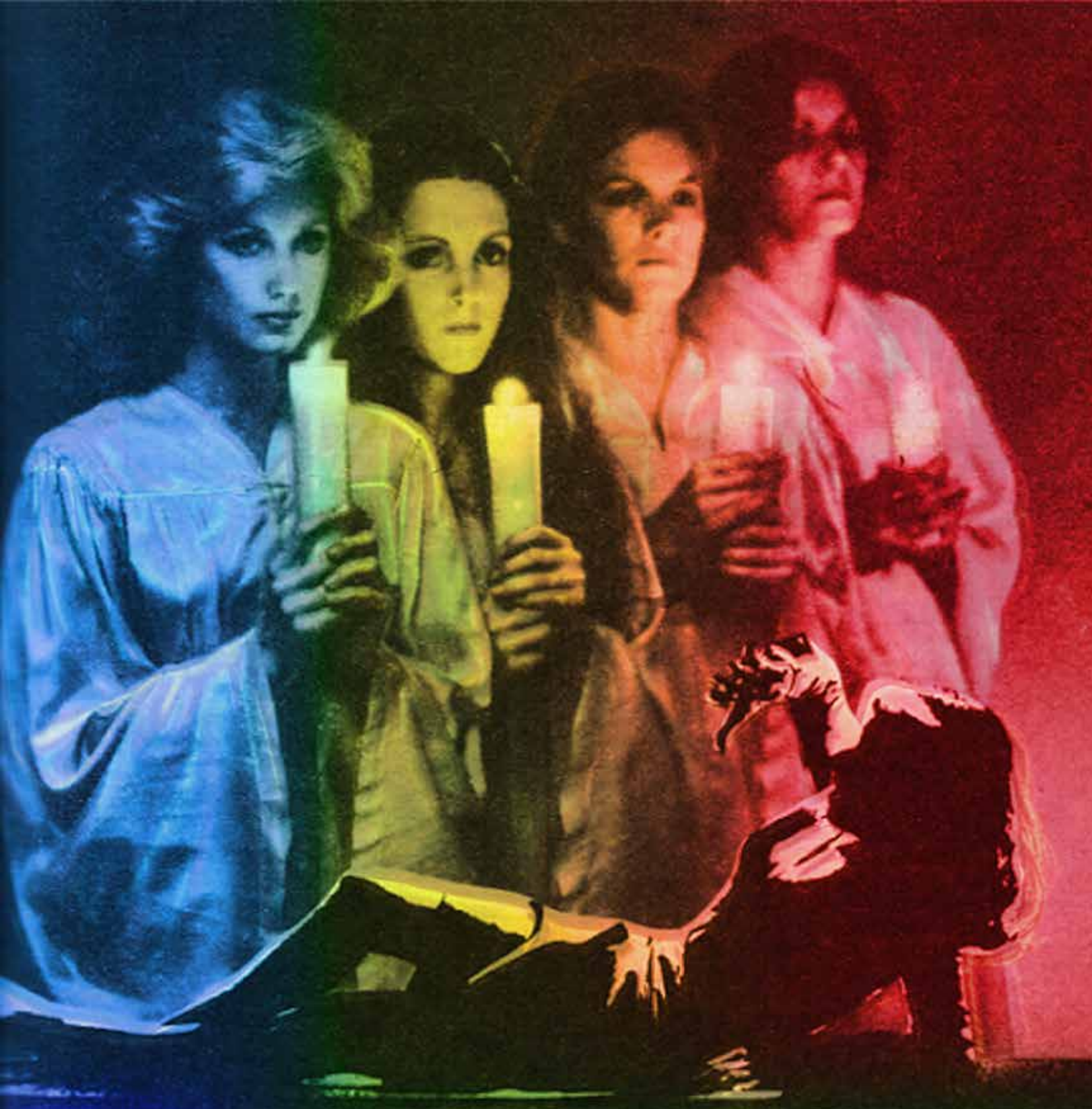
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# The Initiation Of Sarah

The Initiation of Sarah wasn't just another made-for-TV horror flick—it was a quiet storm of psychic power, social cruelty, and tragic consequence. Set against the backdrop of 1970s network television, this cult classic explores what happens when an outcast is pushed too far.

## Revisiting The Initiation of Sarah (1978): A Dark Sorority Horror Classic

**Telekinesis, rivalry, and revenge collide in this cult TV movie that helped define 1970s network horror**

**By Beth Lee**

On February 6, 1978, millions of people sat down in their living rooms, fixed their rabbit ear antennas, and tuned in to watch *The Initiation of Sarah*. In the 1970s, the typical family had one television and a handful of viewing choices. Long before streaming services and cable channels, there were three major networks, making prime time programming a shared cultural experience. News and children's programming dominated mornings from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., followed by more news, game shows, soap operas and talk shows throughout the day. Local and national news aired in the early evening time slots. And then, Prime Time began! Depending on your time zone, which was 8 p.m. Eastern or 7 p.m. Central, and ran for three hours, followed by more local news. The television day ended after late night television with the *Star-Spangled Banner* played and the network signed off until the next morning.

Seventies television was a strange mix of psychedelic children's and variety shows, gritty dramas and sitcoms with a social consciousness. It was a push against the syrup-laden television of the 1960s. Tucked in between there lurked something darker – the extremely popular made-for-tv horror movie. Long before cable channels and VCR tapes pushed horror toward direct-to-video releases of the 1980s, network TV horror was a dependable ratings hit, built on atmosphere, suspense, and strong storytelling, unlike the theatrical horror films of the time.

Undoubtedly, the horror genre was explored on television prior to the 1970s. Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone*, *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour* and *The Outer Limits* were popular shows, relying on psychological narratives which leaned into the traditional morality tale. These anthology series proved that horror and suspense were consumable programming. Networks embraced them because they were inexpensive to produce and could be fit into the “movie of the week” format. While fewer horror movies were produced toward the end of the decade, they were still produced regularly. While the exact number of tv horror movies were produced was not accurately recorded, the number was in the hundreds.

Of those, many remain popular, even today. In addition to the *Initiation of Sarah*, *Trilogy of Terror*, *Satan's School for Girls*, *Bad Roland* and *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* often make the “best of” lists in tv horror. The popularity of *Duel* launched Steven Spielberg to create theatrical releases. With a \$4 million budget, *Salem's Lot* was expensive, ambitious and one of the highest-rated tv movies of 1979 and proved that Stephen King was popular on both the big and small screen. In fact, it is considered one of the final high-quality horror movies created for network television.

Certainly, there were some memorable tv horror films

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a light blue bikini, is walking on a beach at night. The background is dark with some light reflecting off the water. The title 'The Initiation of Sarah' is overlaid in large, bold, yellow letters with a black outline.

# The Initiation of Sarah

in the decade that followed, such as 1981's *Dark Night of the Scarecrow*, but the rise of VHS technology and direct-to-video films changed the way the general public consumed horror. Direct-to-video horror included subjects banned on network television, such as sex, drugs and gore. Phil Bailey writes on *INK19*: "Though quite tame in comparison to the theatrical horror films of the late '70s, *The Initiation of Sarah* still manages to get some effective scares and be a quite entertaining watch with a cast full of familiar names and faces. Oscar winner Shelly Winters was the biggest name at the time, but Morgan Fairchild and Morgan Brittany would both become stars on the prime-time soap opera *Dallas*."

Why was the tv horror genre so popular? While many touched on the supernatural, witchcraft and the occult, others were grounded in domestic situations with a slow burn into terror. For instance, in *Trilogy of Terror*, Karen Black starred in three stories of a professor

being blackmailed, sisters in an unusual relationship and a woman being stalked by an antique Zulu doll. Wes Craven's *Summer of Fear* starring Linda Blair was about a girl whose cousin moved in, and Blair's character tried to convince her family the cousin was a witch. Tv horror relied on suspense, thrills, relatable events and the disruption of the family unit. Instead of outright gore, melodrama and psychiatric mind games were at the forefront of the character-driven narratives. A tv horror film often began on a clear, sunny, ordinary day in the ordinary life of an ordinary person.

In *The Initiation of Sarah*, Patty Goodwin (Morgan Brittany) and her adopted sister, Sarah (Kay Lenz), leave their hometown and begin their studies at the fictional Waltham College. They are pushed by their mother, who is an alumna, to rush at Alpha Nu Sigma (ANS). While the beautiful Patty is immediately accepted, the introverted and less social Sarah is quickly rejected. Instead, Sarah joins the much more

casual Pi Epsilon Delta (PED). The two sororities have a long-standing rivalry dating back at least one generation. Sarah quickly befriends her PED sisters Regina (Susan Duvall), Allison (Talia Balsam), and Mouse (Tisa Farrow). She is the catalyst for a change in the social dynamics within the house. Prior to Sarah joining, the members did not typically spend time nurturing their sistership, they shortly learned the value of friendship. Where ANS is considered an elite sorority, and only the best of the best girls at Waltham College belong, PEDs are seen as misfits by their peers.

The late, great Shelley Winters plays Mrs. Hunter, the PED's mysterious house mother. An anthropology professor with an interest in parapsychology, she quickly takes Sarah under her wing. Mrs. Hunter is aware that Sarah possesses telekinetic powers and encourages Sarah to harness those powers to do her own bidding.

Mrs. Hunter's main priority is to train Sarah to use her telekinetic powers against the members of ANS, so that PED can lead PED to glory again. This becomes important as ANS member Jennifer Lawrence (Morgan Fairchild) actively bullies Sarah, which Patty either doesn't notice or doesn't stop. It's the bullying from Jennifer and ANS sisters that leads Sarah to make the fateful choice of seeking revenge on ANS, leading to tragedy.

TV movies have a long-standing relationship as "event television." In her book *Are You In the House Alone*, Amanda Reyes writes that "Network executives devised the TVM (TV Movie) as an 'event,' which is not an over exaggeration. Designed to air once or twice . . . giving people one shot to catch the program as it aired in real time." Exact numbers are impossible to know, but historically the *ABC Monday Night Movie*



averaged 15.5 million viewers and often landed in the top 25 in the ratings.

*The Initiation of Sarah* aired after an episode of *The Six Million Dollar Man*. Elsewhere that night, NBC aired *Little House on the Prairie* and the theatrical release *Midway*. CBS offered a night of comedies including *Good Times*, *Baby I'm Back*, *MASH*, *One Day at a Time* and *Lou Grant*.

It's impossible to review *The Initiation of Sarah* without discussing the 1976 theatrical release *Carrie*. The similarities are striking. Carrie and Sarah both have troubled relationships with their mother, although each character's issues are polar opposites of each other. While Carrie's mom is overbearing, Sarah's adopted mom seems to barely notice her. Teleki-

nesis as revenge is at the forefront, as is the bullying. The Baltimore Examiner wrote: "In 1978 the film *The Initiation of Sarah* introduces viewers to what Carrie's life would have been like had she lived to go to college. . . While this film has striking similarities to *Carrie* it does contain a few unique twists in the plot. *The Initiation of Sarah* is your typical 1970's horror film with very little fright but with a decent storyline and strong characters." Sadly, both Carrie and Sarah meet a similar demise in the end.

The casting for *The Initiation of Sarah* is one of the movie's strengths. Kay Lenz, with a relatively short Hollywood career, plays Sarah a serious and studious teenager who is less social than her sister, Patty. Played by Morgan Brittany, she went on to star in *Gypsy* alongside Natalie Wood and later starred in



*Dallas*.

Morgan Fairchild was a relative newcomer to Hollywood and recently ended a short stint on the soap opera *Search for Tomorrow*. At 28, she looked and seemed much older than the other coeds in the movie. As Jennifer Lawrence with a stylized cruelty that was a bit of a wink and a nod to the audience.

When the film aired, Shelley Winters was the most famous cast member, with a long career in film and television. Unfortunately, her talents as Mrs. Hunter are largely wasted. The role is not fleshed out, leaving her motivations for revenge on ANS unclear. Nonetheless, Winters doesn't seem to take her role seriously, leaning into both camp and the dramatic.

Paul Hays, of *Airplane* fame, had a very small role, playing a co-ed who was seduced by Jennifer Lawrence to draw Sarah out to bully her.

Robert Day directed *Sarah*, who began his career in the mid-1950s. Over his career, he directed more than 40 projects including several *Tarzan* movies, tv movies, and tv shows including *Kojak*, *The Avengers* and *Matlock*.

Day's use of lighting set the film's tone. The scenes at ANS house were light, giving the rooms a large, airy feel. The PED house, on the other hand, was much darker both in lighting and the dark wood tiling. One room was locked. Day filmed the women in the PED house in the rooms that felt tight, almost claustrophobic. He chose close-ups to see the actor's reactions as way to feel their reaction with them. He created tension by creating "cliffhangers" at each commercial break. The addition of somber music also created suspense.

The filming of the telekinesis effects, including close-ups, are cleverly staged. The close-ups hid mechanics such as fans and other instruments that

made wind blow and objects move without help. Cliff Wengler is credited with Special Effects. With almost 100 credits for Special Effects, Wengler's long career included *The Sand Lot*, *Fight Club* and final *Rambo* movie.

The catastrophic ending of the movie is unexpected. Sarah chooses to harness her powers for revenge. When she realizes that Mouse will be sacrificed, Sarah pulls the plug on her revenge plan. By this time, it's too late to reverse the inevitable. While Sarah and Patty's lives are spared, Jennifer's fate is somewhat ambiguous. Sarah dies in the fire of her own creation, choosing self-sacrifice rather than let anyone else perish. In the last scene, Patty befriends Mouse and chooses to move into the PED house, in Sarah's room.

The storyline feels disjointed at times, which is likely due to the number of rewrites. In an article in *The Washington Post*, William K. Knoedelseder Jr. and Ellen Farley write that "writer [Don] Ingalls said there were 'stark differences' between his final draft of 'Sarah' and the aired version. For instance, 'Writer Ingalls said he was asked to rewrite the climatic initiation ceremony in which the rich sorority girls were further terrorized by Lenz's power. Where he had used fire in the scene, the producers wanted wind instead, he said, 'for production reasons.'" One of the strangest choices is when Mouse is kidnapped and hidden against her will under a table. We don't know why Mouse was chosen by Mrs. Hunter, or why a sacrifice was necessary at all.

The most unclear part of the storyline is Mrs. Hunter's obsession with abolishing ANS. In the scene where they meet, Mrs. Hunter asks Sarah about her deceased father. Mrs. Hunter never clarifies how she knows Mr. Goodwin, but the viewer is left to wonder if Mr. Goodwin is Sarah's biological father and Mrs. Hunter is her mother.

In a passing discussion Sarah and Professor Paul Yates have a conversation that alludes to the fact that a murder happened in ANS and Mrs. Hunter was involved. The details are unclear, and we never learn how that leads to the rivalry between ANS and PED.

The 1970s are replete with tv shows about smart, empowered women. One of the best examples is *Charlie's Angels*. *Sarah*, too, is about women who are empowered, though not necessarily in a positive way. *Sarah* is replete with female power, but the power becomes a dichotomy itself. Jennifer's empowerment is to use her looks and charm to bully and publicly humiliate Sarah and other members of PED. Members of ANS use their power to humiliate ladies who come to the first rush event when they take them to the punch

bowl. They jokingly pat themselves on their backs for doing so, putting down women they deem less attractive than themselves. Mrs. Hunter uses her power to manipulate Sarah and attempt to destroy ANS. Sarah uses her power, literally, which ends in her death. The movie begins with Sarah using those powers to save Patty from a possible predator. Then, she uses her powers to sacrifice herself for her true sister and her sorority sisters. In the end, Mouse and Patty both find their personal powers and decide to move forward from the tragedy that occurred.

The female empowerment is in contrast with the parts of the film referred to as "Jiggle TV." According to Producer Tom Holland, this was the first tv movie that fits into the "Jiggle TV" era, though tv shows





like *Three's Company* predate the movie. Holland said in *Voices in the Dark Interviews with Horror Writers, Directors and Actors* it was “the first wet T-shirt film – and it was a Movie of the Week. In the movie, some girls end up being thrown in a fountain. That was the wet T-shirt bit, and you could see their nipples. It was very shocking, and it got a lot of notoriety because of that.”

Two scenes stand out for this reason. The first is when Sarah uses her powers to send Jennifer into a fountain. When she exits, her nipples are clearly visible through her shirt. The other is a scene where Jennifer and Patty are locked in a shower by Sarah and push up against the shower door, blurry from steam.

When Jennifer is bullying Mouse, Sarah seeks revenge by sending Jennifer into a fountain. It's at this point that Patty seems to realize her sister's Sarah special powers.

Even today, *The initiation of Sarah* has a loyal following among fans of TV horror. While not as iconic as *Carrie*, it is a successful bridge between youthful melodrama and supernatural horror. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. The original *Sarah* was considered a replication of *Carrie*. In 2006, a “loose” remake of the original *Sarah* was created for ABC Family starring Summer Glau.

It resonates today because the themes are universal – bullying, social exclusion, and our desire to belong.

What's at *Sarah's* emotional core is - sisterhood, power and identify - feels modern. For a tv film born of the late 1970s, *Sarah* is a solid showing. From experience and on my podcast, the *Made-for-TV Movie Club*, I've watched many horror films from the 70s, both theatrical and television. This is a solid movie. Though it relies on suspense and special effects to make is scary, it feels in many ways like a theatrical release. The effects are as good as they could be for that era, and the settings are believable. For a movie relying on tension and suspense to scare viewers, it works. But mostly, it's a horror movie with heart, despite the unclear lines between good and evil.

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