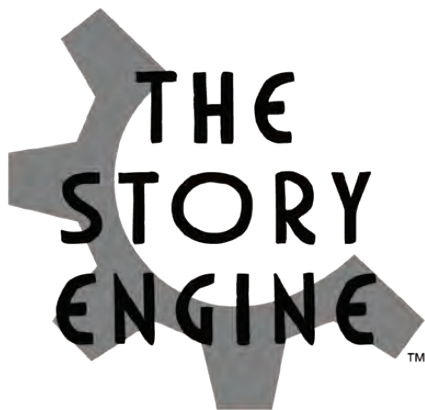




THE STORY ENGINETM

101 POSTCARD-SIZED STORIES

Peter Chiykowski



101 Postcard-Sized Stories

PETER CHIYKOWSKI

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THE SHORTEST STORY

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A photograph of a weathered wall. On the left, there is a dense growth of dark green ivy. The wall itself is composed of a brown, textured material, possibly wood or plaster, and a blue-grey metal door or panel on the right. The text is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

**FOR JASMINE,
WITH WHOM EVERY DAY
IS A NEW STORY
AND EVERY STORY
IS WORTH TELLING**

Newcomers

*hear this story narrated at
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MOLDAAK THE DEMON EMERGED FROM THE SPIRIT BOARD REEKING OF SOOT, SWEAT, AND IRON, AND PROMISING TO BEHAVE. "HELL IS A TERRIBLE PLACE AND WE NEVER GET TO COME TOPSIDE," HE SAID. "I JUST WANT TO ENJOY IT A LITTLE BEFORE I GET SENT BACK."

WE TENTATIVELY AGREED, BUT LEFT THE SPIRIT BOARD OUT JUST IN CASE. OVER THE COMING DAYS, MOLDAAK CLEANED THE KITCHEN, VACUUMED THE STAIRS, AND DECORATED THE LIVING ROOM. WHEN WE ASKED IF HE COULD BURN DOWN OUR LOUD NEIGHBOURS' HOUSE, HE POLITELY DECLINED. "I DON'T WANT TO BE THAT GUY ANYMORE."

A HAPPY WEEK WENT BY. MOLDAAK GOT THE NEIGHBOURS TO QUIET DOWN BY BAKING A PIE AND INVITING THEM TO START A BOOK CLUB. "WE'RE READING THIS INCREDIBLE MEMOIR," HE SAID. "YOU SHOULD JOIN US."

WHEN HELL SENT ANOTHER DEMON THROUGH THE BOARD TO FETCH MOLDAAK, SHE LOOKED AROUND AND WHISTLED. "NICE SPOT YOU GOT HERE." WE MADE UP THE COUCH FOR HER TO SLEEP ON.

IT'S BEEN A MONTH NOW AND WE'RE RUNNING LOW ON BEDS. WE THOUGHT ABOUT CLOSING THE BOARD, BUT THEN SOME FAMILIES DOWN THE STREET VOLUNTEERED TO TAKE IN THE NEWCOMERS, ALL IMPECCABLE GUESTS. THIS MORNING THEY HOSTED A "THANK YOU" LUNCHEON AND TOMORROW THEY'RE LAUNCHING A NEIGHBOURHOOD BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE.

"NONE OF US KNOW HOW LONG WE HAVE HERE ON EARTH," SAYS MOLDAAK. "WE MAY AS WELL MAKE OUR TIME BEAUTIFUL FOR EVERYONE."

Balloons

INTO EVERY BALLOON SHE BREATHED
A DIFFERENT EMOTION.

INTO THIS ONE, ANGER. INTO
THAT ONE, EMBARRASSMENT.
INTO ANOTHER, GUILT.

AND STILL MORE, FILLING
BALLOON AFTER BALLOON
WITH HER SADNESS AND
JEALOUSY AND FEAR.

AND WHEN IT WAS DONE,
IT WAS SHE WHO FELT
LIGHTER, LETTING GO OF
THOSE STRINGS AND
FLOATING OFF INTO
A BRIGHT BLUE SKY.



M a g i c a l S t a f f

*hear this story narrated at
shorteststory.com/staff*



THE WIZARD HAD
A MAGICAL STAFF
THAT COULD
COMMAND
THE ATTENTION
OF ANY DOG.

WELL, IT WAS
MORE OF A STICK.

ANY STICK, REALLY.

*One Last Night
With Our Sister*



SHE COMES AT SUNSET. THE CRICKETS GO QUIET AT HER APPROACH AND THE LONG GRASS WITHERS UNDER HER BARE FEET.

SHE WATCHES FROM JUST OUTSIDE THE LIGHT OF THE CAMPFIRE, AND MY BROTHER AND SISTER HUDDLE CLOSE. HER EYES ARE POOLS OF DARK OIL, HER HAIR A TANGLE OF TWIGS AND BLOOD.

SHE IS ANGRY, LOST, HUNGRY, BUT WE ALL ARE THESE DAYS. THE VIRUS TOOK THE GROWN-UPS FIRST. THERE IS NO ONE LEFT TO EXPLAIN THE WORLD TO US.

SHE WILL DIE IF SHE DOESN'T GO BACK TO THE CITY, WHERE THE OTHER INFECTED HAVE MADE THEIR COLONIES. STILL, SHE STANDS THERE, ACCUSING.

WE DON'T KNOW IF MEMORIES SURVIVE THE CHANGE, BUT I DON'T THINK SHE COULD FORGET. THE CASE HAD THREE NEEDLES. THERE WERE FOUR OF US.

MAYBE TOMORROW WE WILL TRY TO LEAD HER DOWN THE INTERSTATE, PAST THE CORPSES AND LANES OF ABANDONED CARS TO HER NEW HOME.

FOR NOW, WE TRY TO ENJOY ONE LAST NIGHT WITH OUR SISTER.

R a v e n s

guest story by James Miller

RAVENS ARE CLEVER; THEY REMEMBER THE FACES OF
PEOPLE THEY MEET.

THEIR FACES. THEIR SECRETS.
THEIR NAMES.

AND LONG AFTER MAN HAS
GONE FROM THE WORLD,
SOME FEW THINGS
WILL REMAIN.

BONES. DUST.

AND NAMES ON THE TONGUES OF THE RAVENS.



Banished to the Cave



EVERY YEAR, WE SEND A MEMBER OF OUR VILLAGE TO THE CAVES AS
A SACRIFICE. NO ONE EVER RETURNS.


WHEN MY TURN CAME, I WANDERED INTO THE COOL DARKNESS AND
DISCOVERED THAT THE SACRIFICES HAD SURVIVED AND BUILT A
BEAUTIFUL SOCIETY UNDERGROUND.

WE HAD AN INTRICATE CITY, TOWERS OF GLIMMERING CALCITE,
REFLECTING POOLS AS DEEP AND CALM AS ETERNITY. IT WAS
PARADISE. UNTIL THE CITY BEGAN TO GROW CROWDED. FACTIONS
FORMED. THERE WAS FIGHTING IN THE STREETS.

WE CALLED A TRUCE AND DELIBERATED FOR DAYS. AT LAST, WE
DECIDED WE NEEDED TO KEEP OUR POPULATION IN CHECK, OR ELSE
FACE THE FALL OF OUR UTOPIA.

NOW, EVERY YEAR WE SEND A MEMBER OF OUR CITY TO THE
SURFACE AS A SACRIFICE . NO ONE EVER RETURNS.

The Devil Is in the Details



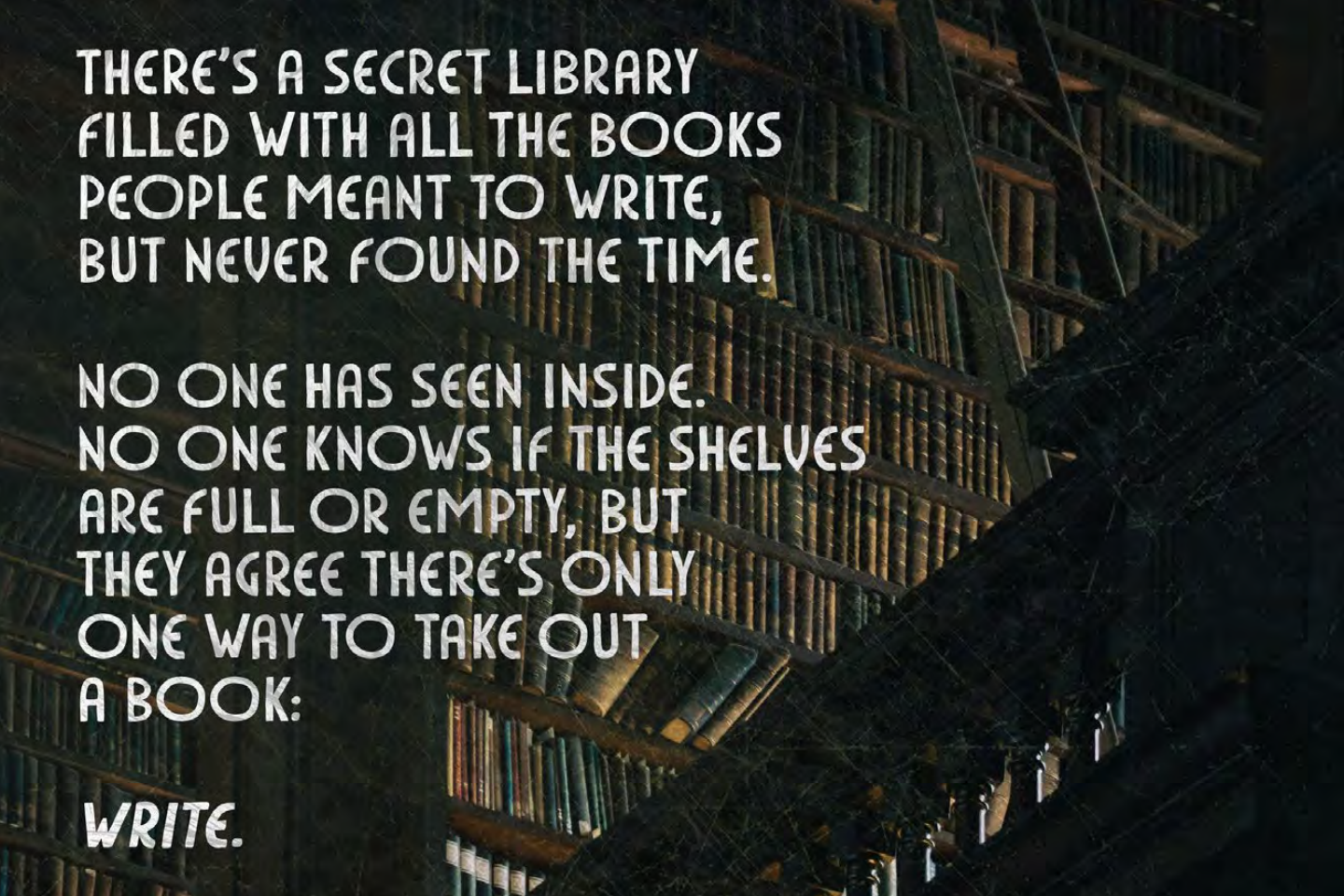
I THOUGHT I'D RECITED
THE INCANTATION
PERFECTLY THE FIRST
TIME, BUT YOU
KNOW WHAT
THEY SAY.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS.

ALSO IN THE
FAMILY DOG
NOW TOO.

***The Library of
Unwritten Books***

*hear this story narrated at
shorteststory.com/unwritten*



THERE'S A SECRET LIBRARY
FILLED WITH ALL THE BOOKS
PEOPLE MEANT TO WRITE,
BUT NEVER FOUND THE TIME.

NO ONE HAS SEEN INSIDE.
NO ONE KNOWS IF THE SHELVES
ARE FULL OR EMPTY, BUT
THEY AGREE THERE'S ONLY
ONE WAY TO TAKE OUT
A BOOK:

WRITE.

S e a s o n f o r W i t c h e s

OUR LEADERS TOLD US THAT ALL OUR FEARS
WERE REAL, AND ALL OUR PROBLEMS WERE
THE FAULT OF DARK FORCES WE COULD
FIGHT WITH FIRE.

IT WAS A DANGEROUS
SEASON FOR WITCHES.

BUT A PROSPEROUS SEASON
FOR TORCH SALESMEN.



Under the Hospital Lights

An aerial night view of a city, likely New York City, showing a dense grid of buildings and glowing lights. A prominent highway with multiple lanes and overpasses is visible in the center-left, illuminated by streetlights. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, purples, and oranges from the city lights.

I WORK AS AN E.R. NURSE IN A CITY
WATCHED OVER BY SUPERHEROES.

EVERY NIGHT MY HOSPITAL FILLS WITH
THE BROKEN BODIES OF THUGS AND VILLAINS
BEAT DOWN IN THE NAME OF JUSTICE.

I KNOW TOO WELL HOW EVEN THE EVIL SCREAM
IN PAIN AND FEAR WHEN A BONE IS RESET
OR A NOSE WRENCHED BACK INTO PLACE,

HOW EVEN THE GOOD SMILE WHEN THEY FEEL
A THROAT GASPING UNDER THEIR BOOT,

HOW THE LINES WE DRAW BETWEEN THEM
LOOK SO BLURRY UNDER THE HOSPITAL LIGHTS.

A n c i e n t M u m m y T o m b

MY HEART IS AN ANCIENT MUMMY TOMB
FULL OF TRAPS AND PUZZLES AND HORRORS
UNTOLD.

AND YOU ARE A BRASH ARCHAEOLOGIST
WITH A CIPHER AMULET AND A GRIMOIRE
OF FORBIDDEN INCANTATIONS.

LET'S DO THIS.



The Mice Will Play

*hear this story narrated at
shorteststory.com/mice*