

STORIES FROM MY OWN MIND

A Collection of Flash Fiction

By Chris Chonos
Volume 1

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I would like to dedicate this first zine to my wife Stacey. If it wasn't for her support and encouragement I wouldn't have been able to do this.

PROLOGUE

This book is a collection of flash fiction and short stories I have written over the years. I have decided to share them with you in this book. I hope you enjoy them, I know I enjoyed writing them.

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WHO DOESN'T LIKE CAKE?

The party was in full swing. I was turning fifty when my friends decided to throw me a big birthday party at the local supper club. There was music and plenty of drinks, but I hadn't seen the birthday cake yet.

"Hey Bob, what's a birthday party without a birthday cake?" in a somewhat slurred voice, "Oh there will be a cake Matt. We are just putting some final touches on things." I smiled at that thinking _what did these guys do now?

I didn't have to wait long because all the sudden I saw one of those large birthday cakes that you see in the movies being rolled out. I hope these guys didn't get me a stripper. Delores would be so pissed if she knew I had a stripper. I was lucky she let me go out tonight for my birthday with the guys, she never did trust Bob...even though he was my best friend.

Bob gestured for me to come over as he staggered over to the cake and then made an announcement. "Everybody may I have your attention. This is my best friend Matt and since it is your fiftieth birthday we thought we would get you something special." he said as bowed and waved his hand in the air like a circus master.

I stood and smiled and waited for the show to begin, but nothing happened. Mike stood staring at the cake and again announced that it was something special, but still nothing. A look came over his face of frustration and he walked over and knocked on the cake and said, "It's time, come out." All the sudden there was some movement in the cake and the top opened up, but it wasn't a stripper, it was something far worse, a clown.

"Hey there gentleman, I'm here to entertain." The clown said in a growling voice that matched his outfit. He had red hair in an afro with white make up and dark circles around his eyes. His face was painted on crooked like The Joker in Batman. His outfit was red and black with big black boots to complete the ensemble.

Everyone stood in complete shock and didn't move until they saw the machete pulled out from inside the cake, and then everyone started to scatter. Running for the exits only to find out that they had been locked from the outside by someone, he must have had an accomplice.

The clown jumped down from the cake and began swinging and hacking at people. Blood began to fly all around. People began to slip and slide as the floor became a crimson ice-skating rink. A group of guys tried to tackle him, but he seemed to have superhuman strength and just tossed them aside.

Bob was standing right in front of me and turned around with a huge smile on his face and said “don’t worry Matt, he won’t hurt you. This is my gift to you.”, “What do you mean a gift for me? Why would you think I would want this?”. Bob began to laugh and in between chuckles said “I know you wanted a promotion, but these assholes were in front of you. You were never going to be promoted if they were here.”

That’s when I looked around and noticed that he was right. All of these guys were my competition for the supervisor position that I was applying for...” Bob you are one sick son of a bitch.”, “I know.” he said and looked around one more time before looking at me and saying, “Happy birthday buddy.”



WRONG TURN

Ahhh I sighed...sweet relief from the pain. Living with cancer sucked and the constant chemo treatment, well let's just say left me feeling empty. I had followed the bright light and am on my way to those pearly gates but wait this isn't the gates I suspected why is there a set of stairs with no hand railing going down.

I stood frozen and scared. I know I had done everything a good person does. I mean I didn't attend church regularly and made fun of the pope, but I was a good person. I was the person that helped the old lady across the street and took in the stray dog. I would never hurt a fly; well, I guess that isn't true I had swatted a few but that wasn't a reason to go to hell.

Then I felt the push that sent me down the stairs and to what was a rod iron gate and person standing there looking a lot

like someone I had seen in Dantes Inferno. “Welcome to the gates of hell my friend, just one?”, he said with an evil chuckle that made me tremble. I looked around bewildered and said, “Hello sir it’s nice to meet you, but there must be some mistake.” He shook his head and looked through his list written in red ink, or I hoped it was ink checking the names.

He shook his head and looked at me with a grin and said, “It seems your name is John Bishom, is that correct?”. I told it was and asked to see how it was spelled because a lot of people used a s and h instead of a c and h. I sighed with relief and told him, “It is the wrong Bichom sir...my name is spelled with a c and h. He looked puzzled and told me to take a seat and that he needed to talk to management about this and pointed over to a couple of chairs with two tv up on the wall.

I sat down feeling that this would soon be over when they figured out, I wasn’t supposed to be here and go to those pearly gates where I belonged. I stared up at the televisions on the wall and both turned on one labeled ‘Hell’ and the other labeled ‘Heaven’. I watched both mesmerized by the one labeled hell because they were running what appeared to be ads promoting the place. There was a free bar, sex every night, rock n roll music from some of my favorite bands, and...my dog was here. He looked up at the screen and spoke to me, “Hey John you got come down here it is a blast...oh yeah sorry for shitting in your shoes.”, then he ran off with some guy’s slippers tearing them up as he zigs zagged.

I was amazed at how much fun he was having but I thought about the brimstone and fire and looked at heavens tv and

saw old people sitting around playing solitaire with elevator music in the background. The screen flickered and went to

another location and showed a single water bottle that people were taking turns getting cups filled. Everyone was soft spoken and holding...cats? I couldn't believe that it could really be that boring, and to do that for eternity would be worse than hell, than I heard the man at the gate return.

He looked at me with an apologetic face and said, "Sorry buddy you were right. I hate these clerical errors, but you were supposed to go to...heaven." He walked back towards his desk by the gate and started to make changes. I walked over to him and shrugged my shoulders and asked, I couldn't believe I was saying this "Can I stay here instead. I mean I'm already here and I really don't want to cause any trouble."

He smiled at me and said, "It is rather irregular, but I know how boring the other place can be. Let me get some papers for you to sign and make it happen." I smiled and said, "Thank you.". He got the papers together for me and I signed as the doors opened and the last words I heard were "Enjoy your stay forever." before I walked into the fiery gates of hell.



JUSTICE SERVED

The police stood, stunned, as they surveyed the mutilated bodies lying on the living room floor. Detective Burns recognized the couple as Mike and Jenny Bennings, along with their parents, Brian and Joyce. The unthinkable had happened in their seemingly quiet town. He turned to his partner, Detective Jones, and made a decision. “I’ll go tell their parents,” he said, heading back to his car to make the call. This was the most challenging part of his job.

As he returned to the house, Burns felt a surge of determination to uncover the truth. He already had a hunch. There were two thugs he knew were involved in drug dealing and always seeking a score: Jimmy Jackson and Ben Wilson. These were their first targets.

Upon arriving at Jimmy's house, they spotted his car in the front yard. Burns warned his partner to be cautious, as these men could be unpredictable, especially when under the influence. He approached the door and knocked, calling out, "Open up, Jimmy. I know your home. We need to talk to you."

Jimmy emerged from the front door, his eyes narrowing. "What do you want, pig?" he growled. Burns remained calm and composed, explaining that they needed to talk to him and Ben if he was there. Jimmy looked at Burns and Jones, then stepped back, allowing the detectives to enter the house.

Ben was sitting on the couch, his hands tucked under his legs, visibly shaken. Burns studied him, then turned back to Jimmy. "What have you two been up to tonight?" he asked. Both men claimed to have been sitting around, chatting, and even playing cards. However, the detectives exchanged glances, noticing Ben's nervous demeanor. They sensed something amiss, as if they were reading each other's thoughts.

Burns looked at Ben and asked, "Is that true, Ben? Were you sitting around gossiping?" Ben just stared at him and replied, "Yeah, that's what we were doing, what of it?" Detective Jones smiled and said, "We need you guys to come with us so we can talk a bit more about what you were talking about." Both Jimmy and Ben didn't resist and agreed to follow the detectives to the police station.

At the police station, they separated the two men and took them to different interrogation rooms to interview them separately. They were quite certain that if anyone was going to break the case, it would be Ben, as he was the most unstable of the two men.

“Okay, Ben, when did you and Jimmy get together tonight?” Detective Jones asked. Ben stammered and wasn’t sure when they had gotten together that night, but he knew it wasn’t late, maybe around 7 or so. Jones could tell he was lying just by the way he was fidgeting and looking away from him. This was going to be easier than he had thought, so he decided to ask him a couple of other questions. “What kind of beer were you drinking and what were you talking about?” Ben just looked at him dazed and said, “You know, just stuff.” Just then, Detective Burns came into the room and told Jones that he needed to talk to him.

Burns looked at him with a smile and said, “We’ve got them, man. They found a bundle of the victim’s stuff under the couch where Ben was sitting. That’s why Ben was so damn nervous.” Both men couldn’t believe their luck. They were going to solve this case quickly and get those drug dealers and thieves off the street in one wild swipe. They gave each other a high five and headed to the door of each man, telling them the good news. But something was wrong. The doors wouldn’t open.

Both detectives grasped the door handles and attempted to force their way into the rooms, but the doors remained impenetrable. It was as if they were locked, but that was impossible. Then, they heard chilling screams emanating from the rooms. The men sounded like they were being torn apart. The door trembled as if the bodies of the men were being hurled around. Both detectives exchanged glances through their shoulders into the door, but nothing was moving. Suddenly, the scene fell silent, and the doors opened on their own. The scene that unfolded was beyond gruesome.

The walls were streaked with blood and flesh. There was nothing left of the two men they had encountered; they seemed to have been ground into hamburger. All that remained were a few scattered bones lying on the floor. The detectives

cautiously made their way back out into the hallway. The front desk sergeant, visibly excited, ran towards them and motioned for them to follow him. He guided them outside.

As they opened the door, they were greeted by the sergeant's enthusiasm. In the full moonlight, they witnessed something they knew that if it weren't for the front desk man's observation, no one would believe it. But in the moonlight, skeletons held each other in an embrace.

Detective Burns recognized the skeletons instantly due to the red hair; it was Jenny Bennings. Both skeletons turned their attention to the detectives and vanished.

The three men stood in utter disbelief, yet they knew that justice had been served. Now, Mike and Jenny could finally rest in peace.



THE FLOCK

The birds flew around the farmhouse, and Malary began to worry about the future. Thankfully, they were only sparrows. Her father had been sick lately, and she had been taking care of him, but he seemed to be on the mend. She walked back into the house to fix him lunch.

Jerry was lying down on the couch, recovering from a bout with the flu that had really taken it out of him. He looked over at his daughter in the kitchen fixing him some chicken soup, his favorite, and it reminded him of his late wife, Mary. He smiled at Malary dancing around in the kitchen and said, "You look so much like your mother right now." Malary smiled and said, "I'm not that pretty, Dad," and laughed.

Bringing the soup over with some crackers, she set the soup on a tray in front of her dad and said, "I hope it is as good as Mom's was." Jerry smiled, took a taste, and smiled. "It is even better." Malary pecked him on the cheek and went back into the kitchen.

Cleaning up after her father didn't bother her at all, and in fact, she thought she owed it to him after all he had done for her. He had paid for her college and supported her when she graduated as she looked for a job. He helped her with bills when she struggled; he was her hero, and now it was time for her to take care of him.

"Did you see any birds outside when you went out on the porch?" her father asked. "Yeah, but only sparrows. They were gathered around the house catching bugs in the air." Jerry smiled and said, "Good. I'm not ready to go just yet." and laughed.

Through the evening, the two of them watched television and played board games until it was time to go to bed. "Do you want to stay on the couch, or do you need help to get up to the bedroom?" "No, I'm good. I'll just sleep down here tonight and finish watching Matlock." Malary gave her father a kiss on the forehead like you would a child and headed up to go to bed.

When she got up to her bedroom, she got ready for bed. Once she had finished in the bathroom, she walked over to the window to take one final look, and that is when she heard it. She froze in the spot, and not only heard one, but what sounded like a flock of crows. She fell to her knees and began to pray, looking out the window. *This can't be*

happening tonight, and why are there so many? she thought to herself.

The crows were the bringers of death. They would pull your soul out of you. Everyone knew this was the nature of things, and there was no way to escape them. The thing that scared her the most was that there seemed to be more than one, which meant there would be more than one death tonight, but who? She ran downstairs to check on her dad. He was lying on the couch watching tv. He turned around to look at her and smiled.

She smiled back and went back upstairs to get some sleep.

Tomorrow, she would talk to the elders to see what they thought; maybe they weren't crows.

The next morning, Malarly got up to the sun shining through the window. She got herself ready and went downstairs to make breakfast for her dad. When she got downstairs, he was sitting at the table drinking coffee and reading the paper. "Good morning, sleep head," he said. She smiled, grabbed herself a cup of coffee, and started making eggs and bacon for breakfast.

Malarly sat down and said, "Dad, I'm going to talk to the elders today to ask them about what sounded like a flock of crows last night. We need to discuss this as a community because this can't be good." Jerry just smiled. She was kind of worried because he didn't seem to be bothered at all by this development. Their whole belief in life and death revolved around the crows. "What are you smiling about?" she asked.

“I have to confess something, darling.” “What is it?” she asked. At that point, he became restless in his chair and finally said in a low voice, “I’m the one that called the crows. I’ve always been the one to call the crows. This town needed cleansing, and there needed to be a change.” Malary’s face was full of shock and asked why. “The bad people in town needed to be removed, so I called the crows to cleanse the town.”

After that day, they never saw a crow again until it was time for Jerry to pass on, the day the last of the crows showed up in town to take a life.



SONGS OF MURDER

The usual commute home was plagued by traffic congestion and a standstill. Jerry yearned to escape the confines of the car. He had just finished a grueling twelve-hour shift, not for the money, but to complete a project. Sometimes, working for hours helped him distract himself from his life's complexities. His recent life had become intricate, and thoughts of his ex-girlfriend lingered in his mind.

Frustrated, he banged his hands against the steering wheel, hoping music would soothe him. He flipped on his favorite station, WKPZ, the 90s alternative rock station that transported him back to his youth. The DJ was visibly excited about something, eager to move on to the next song and end the broadcast.

Jerry's eyes widened in disbelief as he recognized the song playing. It was his ex's favorite, even though he detested

country music. The song was “When You Say Nothing at All.” Why would they play this on this station? He flipped the station, but every station he turned to played the same song. Exasperated, he turned off the radio and stared at it until the traffic began to move again.

After the arduous drive home, Jerry entered his apartment, flicked on the lights, and headed to the kitchen to make supper.

He yelled at Alexa, “Play 90s alternative rock!” Alexa responded with a simple “Playing 90s alternative rock,” but instead of alternative rock, the same song played. Frustrated, he told Alexa to stop and finished making his grilled cheese and tomato soup.

Exhausted, he decided to watch some television and get some sleep since he had to wake up early.

He entered the living room, placed his food on the table in front of the couch, and turned on the television. He flipped it to ESPN, hoping to catch the baseball game. It was the playoffs, and his team was in the game. However, when he reached the station, he found no game on the television. Instead, his ex-girlfriend’s face appeared, and she began singing that infuriating song he detested.

Frustrated, he tried to turn off the television, but it refused to comply. The song played incessantly, driving him to the brink of insanity.

Kneeling in front of the television, tears streaming down his face, he apologized profusely. He confessed his actions and

begged her to stop playing the song. Finally, the song ended, but she spoke to him, demanding that he report her to the police.

Jerry picked up the phone and confessed to murdering his girlfriend, Jenny. He was determined to face the consequences of his actions.

After confessing and being sentenced to life in prison, he was taken to the county jail.

On his first night in his cell, lying on his bunk, he heard music coming from down the block. He couldn't make out the tune until he heard the first line of the song: "It's amazing how you can speak right to my heart." Overwhelmed with emotion, he screamed and collapsed into the corner, tears streaming down his face.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Chris Chonos: I've been crafting stories in some shape or form since I was a kid, and when I stumbled upon flash fiction, I knew I'd found my true calling. This is my first go at gathering a collection of stories into a zine. I hope you enjoy reading them as much as I enjoyed writing them.