

Plotting Success

At the moment our website address is:

<http://thequillguild1.wixsite.com/sfwriters>

January 3rd, 2017

General Meeting

Selby Library Auditorium

1331 First St., Sarasota

6 pm

Guest Speaker Jeff LaHurd, Local author and historian will speak to the Sarasota Fiction Writers on Jan. 3 at 6 p.m. at Selby Library. LaHurd will host an interactive discussion about researching and writing Sarasota history.



LaHurd has written 15 books about the history of the community and numerous articles that have appeared in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Sarasota Magazine and SRQ Magazine. He retired in May 2015 as the history specialist for Sarasota County.

His books include “Quintessential Sarasota,” “Sarasota: A Sentimental Journey in Vintage Images,” “Gulf Coast Chronicles,” “Sarasota, Then and Now,” “The Lido Casino: Lost Treasure on the Beach,” “Spring Training in Sarasota,” “Hidden History of Sarasota” and “John Hamilton Gillespie: The Scot Who Saved Sarasota.” His most recent release is “The Rise of Sarasota: Ken Thompson and the Rebirth of Paradise.”

A video he wrote in 1992, “Sarasota: Landmarks of the Past,” won the award for Outstanding Contribution to Preservation in the field of Communication from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation and was shown on the History Channel.

His book “Sarasota: A Sentimental Journey” earned a Wooden Gavel from the Sarasota Herald-Tribune in the Golden Gavel competition. He was given a Florida Trust for Historic Preservation Award again in 2014 for Lifetime Achievement in History and Preservation. In 2015, the Historical Society of Sarasota County honored him with their first annual Hero of History award. And in 2016, The Caledonian Club of Florida presented him their award for Excellence for the Preservation of the History of Sarasota and Sarasota County.

Sarasota Fiction Writers Critique Meeting

6:00 pm, Wednesday January 18, 2017
 Books-a-Million, Gulf Gate Mall
 Bring 5 pages of work to read,
 At least ten copies, double-spaced, 12 font.

Attention ALL MEMBERS

October 1st is the club's New Fiscal year. Please mail in your dues:

Overdue or New Members: Please mail dues to:
 Sarasota Fiction Writers
 Bob Spitzer
 2450 Harbourside Drive, Apt 213
 Longboat Key, FL 34228

Current SFW Officers:

President: Jerry Keane — destiny716@comcast.net
Co-Vice Presidents: Fred Weiss — fweiss@binghamton.edu
Critique Monitor: Pat Gray — patrickgray1@msn.com
Co-Secretary Publicity: Grier Ferguson
Co-Secretary Newsletter: Dona Lee Gould — DGould497@aol.com
Treasurer: Bob Spitzer mbspitzer@gmail.com
Blogmaster Extraordinaire: Natalie Brown—ngbrown.us@gmail.com

Members please feel free to send a one- or two-sentence synopsis of your published works and a link to sales on Amazon or Barnes and Noble to Natalie. She will grab the cover art to post on the Member Titles pages on our new website. Another place to market – for free.

At the moment our website address is: <http://thequillguild1.wixsite.com/sfwriters>
 We are working to regain the original url, but Go Daddy is not being co-operative

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Savage Chickens

by Doug Savage



www.savagechickens.com

BITS & PIECES

This is our announcement section of happenings and events in the lives of our members. If you have any info you want to share from the sale of a short story, publication of your book, a book signing, entering a contest, especially winning, or if you have a birth, wedding, or other event in your family you just want to share with your fellow members....

Please email me at Dgould497@aol.com and I will include your announcement in the letters. If you know of any upcoming contests, workshops, or conferences you plan to attend, or just want to inform the rest of us about one you like, please let me know. I would also like to know about other local writing groups. Sharing information helps everyone.

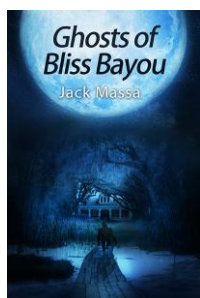
Please consider purchasing books written by your fellow members and support their efforts. Soon it will be your turn! Also, if the books are available on Amazon, write a four or five star review. (If you feel a member's book is lower than a four of five star, please just pass on the review. Amazon considers a three-star and lower a bad review.)

Good Reviews help sell books on Amazon.

New Member Jack Massa writes fantasy and science fiction. His new book *Ghosts of Bliss Bayou*, was released November 14, description can be found here:

<http://triskelionbooks.com/ghosts-of-bliss-bayou/>

His epic fantasy novel, *Cloak of the Two Winds*, is now available in print and e-Book from Amazon. - <http://tinyurl.com/h2wyb6e>. His website is <http://triskelionbooks.com/>



Past Speaker Helaine Mario announced that her novel, *The Lost Concerto*, won first place at Florida Writers Associations Royal Palm Literary awards in the suspense category.

Member Michael Shafer recently completed the edit of his memoir project *Life Behind The Mask* and is **in search of Beta Readers**. Some experience in baseball or umpiring would be helpful but not required. Please contact him on Facebook as Michael.Schafer.31. Reading must be done and back to Michael by the end of January for March release. Last year Michael launched his debut novel, *Two Shots to the Chest*, available on Kindle and Amazon.



Member Andrew Parker, 1st Place winner of our Short story contest, announced the release of his newest novel and a Special Sale of both his new book, *Robots Running Wild*, and his previous novel, *Chess Genius* **FREE for Five Days!** January 1st through the 5th.

“Reading *Robots Running Wild* and *Chess Genius*, may even—but probably won’t—change your life, but they’re a fun read. In December, I came in First Place in the Sarasota Fiction Writers short story contest, which validates that I don’t necessarily suck, but I do have an unusual style. I hope you download them and check me out. If you like the books, please, I beg you, please write a review on Amazon. If enough people download the Kindle and write some decent reviews, I might crack the top 100 like Ms. Klaus did last year. One can dream!”

—Andrew Parker

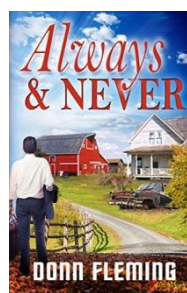
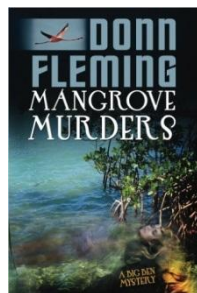
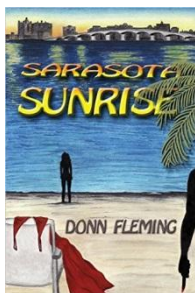
Robots Running Wild

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01NBNUS9T/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1482695902&sr=1-3&keywords=Andrew+Parker

Chess Genius

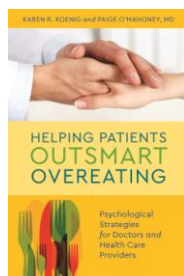
https://www.amazon.com/Chess-Genius-Andrew-Parker-ebook/dp/B00D9JM9V2/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1482695995&sr=1-1&keywords=Andrew+Parker+Chess+Genius

Member Donn Fleming announced his new book launch. *Always & Never* joins *Sarasota Sunrise* and *Mangrove Murders* rounding out the Big Ben Mystery Series Trilogy. Available on Amazon/Kindle or personalized copies through www.donnfleming.com.

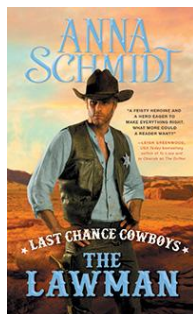


Member Karen Koenig LCSW, Med, an eating disorder therapist, has written a new book that's coming out in January – “Helping Patients Outsmart Overeating: Psychological Strategies for Doctors and Health Care Providers.” The book is published by Rowman & Littlefield and is available for pre-order from Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

“Helping Patients Outsmart Overeating,” which Koenig co-authored with a physician, offers a new paradigm for doctors and health care providers who treat patients with eating and weight concerns. It describes how both providers and patients are frustrated by weight-loss plans and programs that fail long-term and presents a psychology-based explanation for why diets fail and how they, in fact, may adversely impact patients’ mental and physical health. It also includes strategies for doctors, health care providers and higher weight patients to help patients reach their health



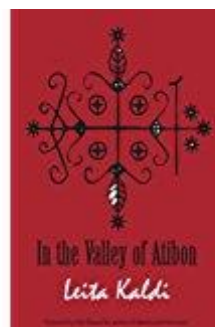
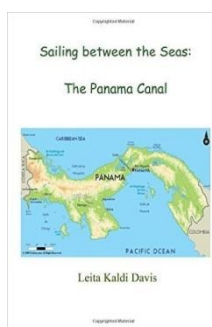
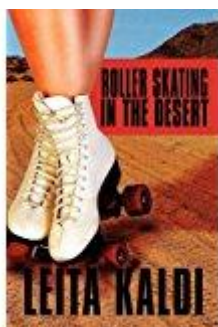
Member Jo Schmidt (w/a ANNA SCHMIDT) a Wisconsin Seasonal member currently has novellas in two anthologies and the second in her Western series: Last Chance Cowboys--will be out in December. Romantic Times has already praised book 2—THE LAWMAN—as follows: Readers who yearn for a solid Western romance are sure to find Schmidt's second Last Chance Cowboy installment as the perfect read. The realistic second-chance at love story — with its intelligent characters, sensuality and suspense elements — engages readers. 4 Stars.



Anna has three times been a finalist for the coveted RITA award for romance fiction and has twice before been recognized by Romantic Times magazine with their Reviewer's Choice Award. Check out her Amazon Author's Page for more on our award winning author.

https://www.amazon.com/Anna-Schmidt/e/B001HOMA1A/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_2?qid=1477949179&sr=1-2

New Member Leita Kaldi Davis worked for the United Nations and UNESCO, for Tufts University Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Harvard University. She worked with Roma (Gypsies) for fifteen years, became a Peace Corps Volunteer in Senegal at the age of 55, then went to work for the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Haiti for five years. She retired in Florida in 2002, and wrote a memoir of Senegal, Roller Skating in the Desert, and of Haiti, In the Valley of Atibon, as well as several travel memoirs available on amazon.com or email her at lkaldi@hotmail.com



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**Member Bohdan O. Szuprowicz** continues to offer E-Books as belated Xmas gifts because they can be delivered immediately to mobile device users,

### **Xmas Gift ideas of E-Books for Mobile Device Users**

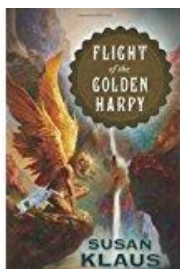
When you click on the link below you will see an Amazon list of all E-Titles that have been published by Bohdan O. Szuprowicz to date. The list shows book covers, prices, plot details, reviews, and the author's biography. Once you find one suitable you can download it to your device to evaluate when you click on the link below:

[http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss\\_1?url=node%3D154606011&field-keywords=Szuprowicz](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1?url=node%3D154606011&field-keywords=Szuprowicz)

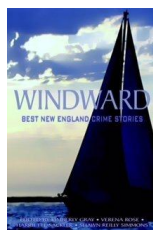


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Member Susan Klaus ranked #82 in the Amazon's Top 100 Best Selling Authors for Mystery/Romance. On Dec. 18 her award-winning thriller, *Secretariat Reborn* was on an Amazon Top 100 Best Seller list for thrillers/suspense in three categories, #10 in paid ebooks, #11 in paperback books, and #12 in Kindle Unlimited. The novel stayed in the top 100 for five days and was also #863 in paperback for all genres. Last month her fantasies were on an Amazon Top 100 Best Seller list. *Fight of the Golden Harpy* was #6 in books, and *Flight of the Golden Harpy II*, *Waylaid* was #75 in free ebooks.



Previous Member Brenda Seabrook announced her short story “Snow Devils” is in the anthology *WINDWARD, BEST NEW ENGLAND CRIME STORIES OF 2016* published by Level Best Books.



Last month her newest book launched: *SCONES AND BONES ON BAKER STREET: SHERLOCK'S (maybe) DOG AND THE DIRT DILEMMA*, by Belanger Books. Belanger exclusively publishes Sherlock Holmes books, scholarly books pertaining to the Holmes books, and books by the Baker Street Irregulars, which included President Franklin Roosevelt and Sir Winston Churchill.

"This is a fun mystery for young readers with an adorable dog who has a real nose for excitement and clues. The numerous illustrations liven up the pages, while sprinkles of historical information make it a real treat. Teamed up with Sherlock Holmes, Digby is a dog criminals and evil doers need to watch out for." - Tonja Drecker - prized children's book reviewer at Bookworm for Kids

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**Member John Pearce** announced the publication of his new novel, *Last Stop: Paris*, the sequel to *Treasure of Saint-Lazare*.

Here's the link to the Amazon page (it's KDP Select), where readers can find the Kindle, paperback and audio editions: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B017OTZN4W>.

Author page is <http://amazon.com/author/johnpearce>.

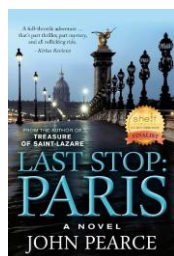
He will be attending a Book signing and Political event Saturday November 5, 2016 from noon until 3 pm in the Village of the Arts at 1004 & 1010 Tenth Avenue West, Bradenton, FL 34205. Stop in and buy a signed copy of either or both books.

*Last Stop* was picked as a 2015 finalist in the best indie book of the year competition sponsored by Shelf Unbound Magazine and Bowker.

The interview is on his blog, here: <http://wp.me/P2PhOq-OY>

### **John Pearce**

Author of [Last Stop: Paris](#)  
and [Treasure of Saint-Lazare](#)



And....

**\*\*\* Member Dona Lee is back at work:**

**Village Voices opens the January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017 for the first Artwalk of the New Year 6pm.**

Our Author of the evening is Ivan Bridgewater, Sci-fi/Fanatsy writer.

The Village of the Arts provides live music, wine and hors d'oeuvres as you stroll the streets visiting any of the 45 galleries and six eateries.

Dona and Al are partners in a video production company. DNA Productions, LLC produces **book trailers**, music videos, workshops, small business commercials, and even a political parody serial for Youtube. We filmed a Flash Mob Dance up in Madeira Beach. If you need a video for your business, your book, your website, or any reason, commercial or personal, contact Dona for more information. (No weddings, the insurance is too pricey) We have registered commercial drones and can provide 4K and HD aerial videos when desired. You can see DNA Videos on Youtube at Al Musitano or Dona's Redneck White House Channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCphTzpNdHdWoe44C50yPDyw>

Her literary business, Plotting Success (named after our newsletter), is the canopy for many of the numerous projects she manages. Her **Author Services company offers editing, manuscript evaluations, and coaching on all aspects of writing.** We have helped numerous writers self-publish their books at a fraction of the cost charged by subsidy publishers AND you retain ALL your rights and royalties. Plotting Success also offers publishing services; formatting your manuscript for both e-book and tree book (paper) publication, including custom-created covers, and help with the upload to Create Space. After you are published, I offer coaching to help you focus your marketing plan directly to your readers. **All at a price far below subsidy and independent publishers.** And when you are done, you receive ALL royalties directly from Amazon's Createspace and Kindle divisions. References are available.

Interested in being interviewed about your books? For over three years Dona has hosted a weekly show on Radioearnetwork.com every Thursday at 2 pm called *Culture Coast*, interviewing musicians and artists of every venue. Check it out online at [www.radioearnetwork.com](http://www.radioearnetwork.com) Please tell your friends and neighbors to listen in and discover what our Culture Coast has to offer. If you know any artists, **authors**, or musicians in the local area who might be interested in talking about their music, books, or art, have them contact [DGould497@aol.com](mailto:DGould497@aol.com) for an interview. Now that the Author's Connection is no longer taking new interviews, please contact Dona for your new releases and general book interviews.

If you have finished or are close to finishing your manuscript, it would behoove you to buy a copy of *Published! A Complete Guide to Nontraditional Publishing.* The book helps writers at every level decide whether to follow the path to traditional publishing, use a subsidy, or self-publish; and if the decision is subsidy or self-publishing, how to choose the best option for your manuscript. It includes sections on editing, formatting, and marketing as well. Foreword by best-seller self-publishing guru Dan Poynter.



For more information on any of the above feel free to contact Dona Lee at [DGould497@aol.com](mailto:DGould497@aol.com) or call 941-748-6865.

We now create live action & computer slide show book trailers.

Al Musitano has completed the live action book trailer for the YA novel, Gothmares. Check it out on youtube.com, here's the link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iklBBPIP\\_8I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iklBBPIP_8I)  
If you wish to inquire on having your own live action or slide show book trailer, contact Al Musitano at [eye2eye@inbox.com](mailto:eye2eye@inbox.com) or 941-896-0031. He creates both live action trailers, computer graphics to text and music like Andrew's, or green screen scenarios like Dave's.

**Member Dave Pierce's** new website: <http://davidmpearce.wix.com/author> has an example of one of our trailers. Dave is planning on a traditional path to publication so he has information on what he is working on and excerpts from his first book as well as a book trailer.

This is Andrew's Book Trailer:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7jGQdjWw5I> Please give it a thumbs up. Ivan helped him create it but has asked Plotting Success to take over any future requests for these trailers. If you want us to create a book trailer, please contact me at [DGould497@aol.com](mailto:DGould497@aol.com). Andrew would appreciate any comments you might have about the trailer.

Contact **Andrew Parker** at [andycp1999@yahoo.com](mailto:andycp1999@yahoo.com)

Want to advertise your published book? Your company? Your services?

If you would like to place an ad in our newsletter or know someone else who might like to place an ad, let me know. The cost is \$5.00 a month or \$50.00 a year for three to five lines of text.

Pictures will be extra.

Send requests to [Dgould497@aol.com](mailto:Dgould497@aol.com) write SFW Ad Query in the subject line

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Paid Advertising (Place your Ad here - \$5.00 a month or \$50.00 a year)

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## Florida Author's Book Gallery

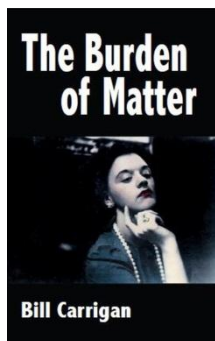


International Online Weekly Radio Show for Creatives  
Literary, painting, musical, culinary, healing, brew masters, and more.

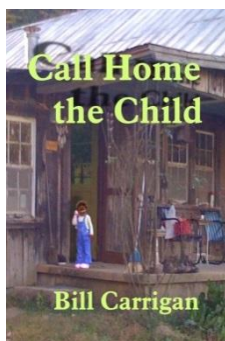


Contact me for help with editing, formatting for self publication, ghost writing, and more.  
Reasonable rates, local references.

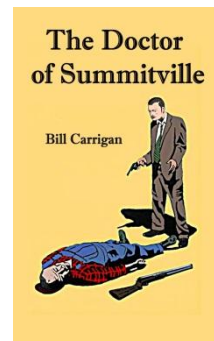
**Read and enjoy the many works of our esteemed Bill Carrigan.** All editions are newly edited and available on Amazon. (Search Books by Bill Carrigan) Read the first three chapters of any book for free. Kindle editions are 2.99 and paperbacks cost around \$10.00. Please review on Amazon after reading.



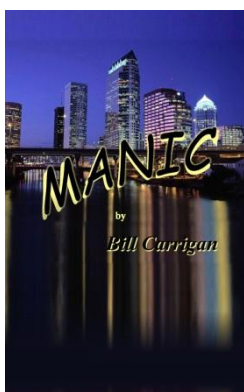
Anatomy of a WWII love affair in Washington D.C.



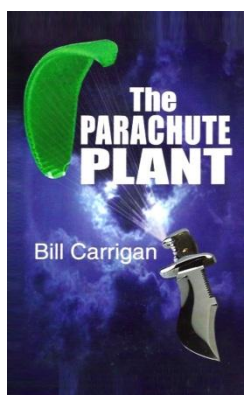
An interracial adoption in 1988 Virginia breaks bad.



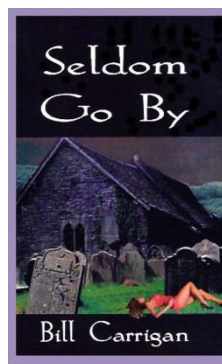
In 1927 a doctor's love affair leads to a death



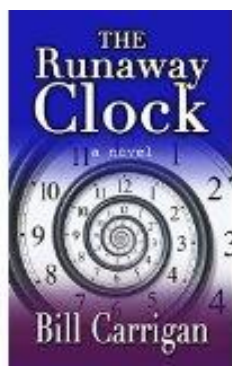
A young Tampa writer joins up with a killer to bring him down.



An Oregon doctor and wife solve gruesome murders.



Murders surround Aunt Esterleen at her mansion, Seldom Go By.



A scientist falls victim to premature aging after proving its cause.



A varied palette of tales and a translation of Poe's "Ulalume."

## **Other Voices, Other Rooms**

Local area critique groups and meetings

An online writing blog for Sarasota and Manatee Writers includes all the vast resources available to local writers. The web address has been changed:

[www.FloridaWritersAssociationManatee.com](http://www.FloridaWritersAssociationManatee.com)

I hope you check it out and find it useful. If you know of any other resources please feel free to add them or forward the information to me and I will add them.

There is a similar blog for Pinellas and Hillsborough writing events at:

<http://www.marylouihess.com/enews.html>

### **Florida Writer's Association Manatee**

**Critique group**, bring six to eight copies of up to ten pages double-spaced.

Fiction and Nonfiction, shorts, articles, novellas, memoirs, & Novels

First & third Thursdays, at 6 pm, January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 & January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017

First & third Saturdays, at 4 pm January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 & January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017

All meetings are held at **Village Voices & Eclectic Art Emporium**,

1010 10<sup>th</sup> Ave West, Bradenton.

For more information call Dona Lee at 748-6865

or email to [Dgould497@aol.com](mailto:Dgould497@aol.com)

### **Florida Writers Association, Sarasota Branch**

FWA-Sarasota Chapter

FWA Sarasota meets two evenings each month: on the FIRST and THIRD Wednesday. The training room of the Nokomis Volunteer Fire Department is located at the corner of US41 and Pavonia Road. Pavonia Road is the street that has the flashing emergency lights on US 41 south of Matthews-Currie Ford. Pavonia is about a quarter mile south of Albee Road.

The FIRST meeting of the month is dedicated to subgroups of various genres, will be January 4, 2017. The members of each subgroup bring stories, poems, articles, or novel chapters for reading and critiquing. The SECOND meeting of the month January 18, 2017 is the general meeting. A few members read to the entire group and then receive comments and suggestions from the group. The rest of the general meeting is dedicated to questions, discussions, progress reports, and general information about writing, publishing and marketing.

A half hour of socializing is encouraged for attendees arriving at 6:00. The regular meetings begin promptly at 6:30 and last until about 9:00. Come join us on the FIRST and/or THIRD Wednesday

. For questions you may email Ernie Ovitz at [egovitz@gmail.com](mailto:egovitz@gmail.com)



## **ALL NEW! Gulf Coast Sisters in Crime**



### **HO! HO! HOMICIDE**

January 7, 2017 from 1:00-3:00pm

Gulf Gate Library, Meeting Room B

7112 Curtiss Ave, Sarasota, FL 34231

Michelle Rinaca is the volunteer coordinator  
for the patrol division of the Sarasota Police Department.

New SinC benefit available to chapter members only. Check it out!

<http://www.sistersincrimelibrary.org/default.asp?page=OnlineCourses>

Contact *Wendy Dingwall* for more information.

[www.wendydingwall.com](http://www.wendydingwall.com)

[wendyldwriter@comcast.net](mailto:wendyldwriter@comcast.net)

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### **NEW Memoir Group**

A memoir writing group meets at the Braden River Library on SR 70 the fourth Tuesday from 1 pm - 2:30 pm. This month that will be January 24, 2017. There is no fee.

Call 941 727-6079 for more information.

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AMI Gulf Coast Writers

Meet the 1st Wed. of each month, at 12:45pm at the library in Holmes Beach. This month that will be January 4th. For more information contact Alice Moerk at amoerk@tampabay.rr.com or contact the library. 5701 Marina Dr, Holmes Beach, FL 34217 Phone:(941) 778-6341

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NEW FWA YOUTH WRITERS GROUP FORMING

Pinnacle Academy will host our first Youth Writers Group in the area starting in January 2017. The group will be monitored by creative writing teachers but is comprised only of youth 18 and under. It is an open group, membership to Florida Writers Association Youth Writers (\$15.00 annually). Stay tuned for more information and if you know any young writers, let them know.

FICTION WRITER'S FORUM

Critique group

6:30 pm Second Thursday of the month January 12th, 2017
Books-a-Million, Gulf Gate Mall

6:30 pm Fourth Thursday of the month, January 26th, 2017
Books-a-Million, Gulf Gate Mall

Bring ten to fifteen copies of up to ten pages of your fiction.
Books-a-Million, Gulf Gate Mall

Sarasota Authors Connection

Marketing & Publishing for Writers

When: Tuesday, Jan. 10, 6 pm
Where: Fruitville Library, 100 Coburn Rd.
Speaker: The guest speaker is D.D. Scott, international best seller and publicity coach who will discuss "Finding your readers" on Social Media.

A Writer's Group in Lakewood Ranch

Scribes Club

A writers group! It will be fun! Exercise the mind and develop the cranial muscle. Enjoy the "Smorgasbord for the mind" a potluck that all participants bring. This is the place for camaraderie and exchange of ideas. This offers an opportunity for honing your skills, as a writer. If you can pick up a pen you can write! So give yourself a chance to expand your horizons. Experienced writers please join and help others learn the skills you have acquired.

The club meets at Town Hall on the first and third Saturday of every month 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. To join email ACHaddha@aol.com , Aroon Chaddha.



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## ABC - Artisans of Books



### Marketing, PR, and Sales group

**ABC is sponsoring a writing contest. See Contests below for more information.**

**General Meetings:** Our members meeting moved to the Selby Library. They meet on the third Wednesday of each month from 1p – 3p.

They now accept authors of adult books as well as our children's authors

The membership fee is a flat \$25

The main focus is still on marketing and having some great speakers coming to share their information.

Contact Brenda Spalding:

[www.brendaspalding@abcbooks4children.com](http://www.brendaspalding@abcbooks4children.com)

[www.brendaspalding.com](http://www.brendaspalding.com) or Nancy Buscher for more information:

[nancybuscher@yahoo.com](mailto:nancybuscher@yahoo.com)

**Applications are on the website:**

[ABCBooks4Children.com](http://ABCBooks4Children.com)

#209 1532 US 41 Highway BP S

Venice FL 34293-1032

*ABC– Artisans of Books* is made up of book authors & illustrators, and mainstream authors. Our mission is to form a networking alliance of independently published, self-marketing, and aspiring artisans to exchange knowledge, share experiences, assist in marketing, and promote literacy wherever possible.

## The Sarasota Creative Writers

Sarasota Alliance Church

7221 Bee Ridge Rd

Sarasota, FL

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The Sarasota Creative Writers

Tue Jan 17 2017, 6:30 PM

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The Sarasota Creative Writers

Tue Jan 31 2017, 6:30 PM

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The Sarasota Creative Writers

Tue Feb 14 2017, 6:30 PM

[http://www.meetup.com/The-Sarasota-Creative-Writers-Meetup-Group/events/231753288/?af=event&af\\_eid=231753288&https=off](http://www.meetup.com/The-Sarasota-Creative-Writers-Meetup-Group/events/231753288/?af=event&af_eid=231753288&https=off)

Please do not bring work with graphic sex, violence, or heavy usage of gratuitous profanity.

## **Manasota Films Group**

January 18, 2017

With the New Year, there will be a new location and a new format for this group of local film industry creatives. The group has members from every facet of the industry: Writers, Actors, Actresses, Film Crew, Extras, Directors, Producers, Set Designers, Make-up pros, Costume designers, and anyone else with a desire to be part of our growing film industry. Membership is **FREE** and currently they number over 1100. **Join up on Facebook by going to Manasota Films** and request to join.

For four years they have created Indie films and shorts and shared them on the big screen once a month at local theatres. Now they are changing the format to encourage everyone to work together and discuss what they need from each other to become more successful.

Monthly meetings will be held at the private upstairs bar at The Starlite Room, at 10th and Coconut downtown Sarasota. The Starlite has established itself as the place to be for the performing arts and artists in Sarasota. Meetings will be in a much more open format, and will be more conducive to face to face interactions. They will have guest speakers, sharing of ideas, and discussions about how we can best support Sarasota's new film industry. They still have the capacity to screen and critique locally produced films - it's all wide open.

## **Screen Writer's Circle**

January 12, 2017

The Screen Writer's Circle meets at **Selby Library 5:30 to 7:30 pm.** in the second floor conference room.

Table readings must be scheduled with the moderator, Laurie Stoner. She has a group of producers, directors, actors, and actresses to perform the table readings.

They schedule 3 readings running approx. 40 minutes each.

There is more information on Facebook: Sarasota Screenwriters.

Please let Laurie know if you are planning on attending as they are outgrowing the room and only have seats for 30. See website: [www.sarasotascreenwriters.com](http://www.sarasotascreenwriters.com). A LOT of good feedback is coming in due to these professional table readings.

For more information contact Laurie Stoner at [mlstoner52@gmail.com](mailto:mlstoner52@gmail.com)

## **New Screen Writing Group**

### **SARASOTA'S SCREENWRITERS, STORYTELLERS AND CREATIVES**

New screenwriting group, also covers storytelling.

Richard Keehn, an award winning screenwriter as well as the producer on the upcoming *Screenplay Show* by Rick Ramage invites you to his writing group no matter your skill level. Just bring your imaginative, curiosity and discipline. The major focus is on the art, craft and – my favorite – the business of screenwriting, but we also will delve into storytelling in general as the need warrants. So welcome. Everyone has a story to tell. It's time to tell yours.

For More Information Contact Richard @ [richard@thescreenplayshow.com](mailto:richard@thescreenplayshow.com)

## **A Poetry group! (Not in Lakewood Ranch)**

### **Selby Poets**

Selby Poets meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month 10:00 AM – noon.

**January 19, 2017 (10 am to noon)** meeting of **Selby Poets** at the **Banyan Cafe** - located on the grounds of the **Ringling Museum**. 5401 Bay Shore Rd, Sarasota.(941) 359-3183

<http://www.urbanspoon.com/r/30/1282677/restaurant/Tampa-Bay/Banyan-Cafe-Sarasota>

Purchase of a drink (coffee, tea, soda) is expected. It is an informal group that gathers to encourage and 'gently' critique each other's work. Park across the street – no entry fee to go to Cafe – walk or ride shuttle from entrance.

Everyone is welcome.

Bring 8 - 10 copies of one or two original poems to read aloud.

Open to the Public / Free

Contact: Gail Ghai

[GGhai@ArtPoetica.com](mailto:GGhai@ArtPoetica.com)

**And the Poetry Group is now growing into a second venue and day!**

**Starting in January 2017**

**Braden River Library Poetry Workshop.**

4915 53rd Avenue E Bradenton, Florida 34203 941-727-6079

**First Tuesday of the month from 3-5 PM. This month January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017**

Contact: Gail Ghai

[GGhai@ArtPoetica.com](mailto:GGhai@ArtPoetica.com)

**A member of the Poetry Group is hosting a PowerPoint reading**

from his new collection, *A Gesture of Words*, at the Selby Library on Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup> at 10:30AM in the Auditorium. John Foster's program will include a discussion of the history and development of a number of lesser known poetry forms

### **SRQ Horror, Sci-Fi, and Fantasy Writers.**

SRQ Horror, Sci-Fi, and Fantasy Writers is a meetup writers group in Sarasota for in-depth critiquing.

Please contact Patricia La Barbera for more information.

Join @

<http://www.meetup.com/SRQ-Horror-Sci-Fi-and-Fantasy-Writers/>

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**Florida Writers Foundation**, a 501(c)3 non-profit formed to promote literacy, as well as enhancing the writing skills of children, youth, and adults is stretching out for members and volunteers across the state. Their volunteers and partners have already started to make a difference by visiting elementary schools for reading days, sponsoring poetry contests, donating books to under-privileged schools, and contributing funds to middle school contests.

They have a new chairman, Tom Schwartz, who is working on fundraising including bringing in a nationally known bestselling author for the October Celebrity Workshop. They are establishing \$500.00 scholarships for students enrolled in a Florida College writing program. Please go to their website for more information. [www.floridawritersfoundation.org](http://www.floridawritersfoundation.org)



## For our writers to the north...

The SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writer's & Illustrator's), critique group is led by Karen Hamade, (a FWA affiliated group). Any interested parties may contact her at [www.brandonwriters.com](http://www.brandonwriters.com) and she will be happy to email the next meeting information. They are a children's book author critique group in Brandon, Florida, who primarily critique Picture and Chapter Books, Middle Grade, and YA. For meeting information, please use online 'contact' form at: [www.brandonwriters.com](http://www.brandonwriters.com)

There are also Florida Writers Association Groups in Pinellas, Hillsborough (4), and Polk Counties. Check the website for details at [www.floridawriters.net](http://www.floridawriters.net)

## For those writers to our south....

### Peace River Writers (a FWA affiliated group)

Group Leader: Douglas Houck

Type: Critique and Discussion

Meets: First Saturday of every Month at 9:00 am

New Location: Wyvern Hotel

101 E. Retta Esplanade

Punta Gorda, Florida

There are also Florida Writers Association Groups in Englewood and Peace River. Check the website for details at [www.floridawriters.net](http://www.floridawriters.net)

# Marketing Opportunities

## Marketing Opportunity

### 1st Annual Car Show & Craft Fair

Saturday, February 4, 2017

9-1

Pre-registration for cars is \$10.

Registration day of show is \$15.

Craft Vendors per table \$25.



- + Breakfast
- + Silent Auction
- + Music by DJ Tommy's Tuned



Preregistration Dead line is January 23rd

**WAIVER:** I agree to release Charlotte County Public Schools and all affiliates from any and all liability for any damage, injury, lost or stolen merchandise during or resulting from this event.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Send remittance to: Charlotte Technical College 18150 Murdock Port Charlotte, FL 33948 Attention Cathy B.

## North Port Free Radio Time

If authors would like to read poems or short stories, they can take advantage of a new opportunity on Monday nights at 97.5 radio station, which is in a strip mall south of Warm Mineral Springs in North Port. Readers meet at 7:00 and are taped at 7:30 at the Common Grounds Meeting Hall next door to the 97.5 radio station.

Because the project is getting off the ground, there's no problem for an author to find a reading slot. On Sunday at 3:00, people from all over the world can hear the authors on the INTERNET. By December, 97.5 expects to have the capability to be heard on the RADIO from Ft. Myers to Sarasota. This heightened media range was made possible by a large donation from a community member for a large tower.

For more information contact Dobie Pasco at [sonnypasco59@yahoo.com](mailto:sonnypasco59@yahoo.com)

To pull this station up on the INTERNET, go to: [KDWradio.com](http://KDWradio.com)

The station is ALL volunteer.

KDW Radio is located at 12737 Tamiami Trail, North Port, FL

Station Manager: RJ Malloy 941 564-8737

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Contests

805 Literary Arts Journal Flash Fiction Contest

Manatee County Public Library is hosting a Flash Fiction Contest open to all Manatee County Library Card Holders. The winner will win a ticket to The Library Foundation's Evening with Nicholas Sparks.

Won by our Member Jennifer Ammon!

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## Lone Star Contest

Northwest Houston RWA© is proud to announce  
The 23rd Annual Lone Star Writing Competition 2016  
We'll begin accepting entries on April 1, 2016, so be sure to check the website.

**A place to find a few more Book Contests**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM BOOK AWARDS CENTRAL**

**IF YOU HAVE NEWLY PUBLISHED TITLES TO PROMOTE, WE HAVE AN AWARDS  
CONTEST FOR YOU**



Independent Publisher Book Awards - Axiom Business Book Awards - Living  
Now Book Awards  
Moonbeam Children's Book Awards - eLit Awards

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Do you have an Award-worthy book that deserves more attention? Book Awards are an efficient, affordable marketing tool that can make a huge impact on your marketing campaign. Each year, medals go to both established mid-sized publishers and first-time self-publishers. We reward those who exhibit the courage, innovation, and creativity to bring about change in the world of publishing. This spirit and expertise comes from publishers of all sizes and budgets, and books are judged with that in mind.

Get more attention. Get a shiny sticker for your cover. Get the recognition your book deserves!

Need entry information about any of these book awards contests? See details and links about each contest below, or email me to request guidelines or to deliver questions or comments: **Jim Barnes, Awards Director** - [jimb@bookpublishing.com](mailto:jimb@bookpublishing.com)

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Midlife Collage sponsors a weekly contest of midlife short stories. U.S. citizens and legal residents age 40 and older may enter. The Editor selects five stories for publication on their website each week. Readers leave comments and Facebook thumbs-up likes urging the panel of Judges to choose a contest winner. Readers also send the Judges their opinion of the best story on our Closing Arguments page. The contest period is Monday through Sunday noon PT. The first-place story enters the Winner's Circle and receives a cash prize of \$50. Winners of a \$50 cash prize are eligible for a \$100 contest, which we run quarterly. ANYONE, worldwide, age 18 or older can comment on the stories in a contest.

Updated web site address for submissions: You should be able to post a submission at the following link: <http://www.writermag.com/writing-resources/update-my-contest/?id=6863&title=Midlife%20Collage%20Contests>

www.MidlifeCollage.com

***yes, the spelling is collage not college.**

Of Writing Interest

Business opportunity

Need some extra \$

FELLOW WRITERS, how would you like to make some extra cash from home? We are a 20-year old company, that helps people get where they want to go, while providing powerful products that restore health and build vitality. Ours is a powerful business opportunity that transforms lives—not only your own— but others as well.

Call Barbara at [941-600-7080](tel:941-600-7080) for more information.

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### Wordier Than Thou

Open Mic for Writers of Prose

Short fiction read to other writers in the back room of Sarasota Brewing Company.

No critique, just sign up at the front around 6:30.

Starts at 7 pm. Food and drink available for purchase.

Usually the third Wednesday of each month.

Check Facebook for verification

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NEW A new rich source for poets has been recommended by Pat Gray. For those of you who enjoy reading and writing poetry, please enjoy:

<https://archive.org/details/naropa?&sort=-downloads&page=2>

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## Paid Publishing Opportunity.

Authors accepted for publication are paid. Thank you so much.

- The first issue of *Today & Yesterday*, an online international literary journal published by Laughing Fire Press, is available at [todayandyesterday.co](http://todayandyesterday.co). (.co NOT .com)
- Featured in this issue are short stories, poems, a memoir, and an author interview from contributors either living in or from the US, Germany, Nigeria, Turkey, the Philippines, and Iran.
- Laughing Fire Press invites submissions for the next issue of the journal. Short stories, poems, essays, interviews, memoirs, and photographs that examine contemporary or historical socially-relevant subject matter are desired. Areas of interest include the arts, politics, popular culture, economics, science and technology, human rights, psychology, philosophy, and the environment.

Jed Lewis  
 Publisher and Editor-In-Chief  
 Laughing Fire Press  
[www.laughingfire.com](http://www.laughingfire.com)  
[www.facebook.com/LaughingFirePress](https://www.facebook.com/LaughingFirePress)  
 @LaughingFire

### *Romance Wanted!*

Do you love writing romance as much as you love reading it? If you've written a full-length romance, Crimson Romance wants to consider it for publication! We're looking for romances in all the popular categories (contemporary, historical, romantic suspense and more!) Have an idea for a romance collection? Drop us a line and we'll consider it. Please submit your full story to [editorcrimson@gmail.com](mailto:editorcrimson@gmail.com) with "Short Story Submission – [intended collection]" in the subject line. If we get enough submissions to publish more than one title in each category, we will.

- See more at:

[http://www.crimsonromance.com/submissions/?et\\_mid=624366&rid=235541304#sthash.x3f1PFYf.dpuf](http://www.crimsonromance.com/submissions/?et_mid=624366&rid=235541304#sthash.x3f1PFYf.dpuf)

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Agents

A recommended source for finding literary agents:
<http://www.ebookcrossroads.com/agents.html>

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New Imprint Seeking Romance Stories with Heat

Untreed Reads is pleased to announce a brand-new imprint to expand our catalog of offerings. Untreed After Dark is our new line for romance stories that take the heat level up a few notches from our sweet stories. Even though there is a lot of romance on the market today, we feel that there are still niches to fill. That's the ultimate goal of our new line.

We do have some rules for this new line:

1. Every sexual orientation is welcome.
 2. We would especially love to see romance stories about people of various ethnic backgrounds, people in their fifties or older, people with disabilities, 19th and 20th century historical (1800-2000), etc.
- If you have looked around and said, "I don't see another story out there remotely like mine," you're probably what we're looking for.
3. Works need to be believable and real. No genies, werewolves, vampires, body-switchers, witches, aliens, etc. Need real people in real relationships/situations.
 4. Sorry, but no works that take place before 1800. We feel that market has plenty of material already.
 5. Only works 25,000 words or more will be considered. Short story collections, however, would be fine.
 6. Cross-genre stories are especially welcome (romantic mysteries, for example).
 7. As we are not specifically looking for erotica, the heat level is currently limited to "NC-17." Sex doesn't have to be in the story, but if it's appropriate for the work, that's fine.
 8. The overall story is infinitely more important to us than a couple of hot scenes. We prefer to think of this as "literary romance/literary erotica." We want engaging characters with real romantic struggles and successes.
 9. HEA (Happily Ever After) is NOT a requirement. Sometimes romance doesn't end with the two people ending up together, and that's perfectly OK. That's real.
 10. Absolutely, positively NO: rape, bestiality, sex with underage people, or all the other things you would expect to be forbidden.
 11. Previously published works are definitely acceptable, providing electronic rights have reverted to the author.
 12. Works that have been published through a self-publishing venture (i.e.: Smashwords, Kindle Direct/Kindle Prime) will not be accepted.
 13. Agents and current Untreed Reads authors may submit directly to: Jay Hartman.
All others need to send works to submissions@untreedreads.com
 14. All submissions need to be sent in their entirety in RTF, DOC or ODP formats, Times New Roman, 12 pt. This rule does not necessarily apply to current Untreed Reads authors or agents. If you are unsure if a work would be appropriate for us, please do feel free to query Jay Hartman at jhartman@untreedreads.com.

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Saw Palm – A Literary Magazine published by USF Tampa

Saw Palm is a literary magazine devoted exclusively to creative work from and about Florida. For more information, please see our website: <http://www.sawpalm.org/>

Prepare Your Submissions for Saw Palm 2014, submissions are accepted between July 1 and October 1st.

Saw Palm is a Florida-themed journal, however we welcome writers and artists from across the country and the globe as long as the work is connected to Florida (via images, people, themes, et cetera). We also welcome creative works from Floridians that are not obviously about someplace else. Please check out past issues, available for download as free PDFs. We publish one issue per year in the spring.

Saw Palm does not accept work that was previously published either online or in print. We welcome simultaneous submissions as long as you immediately notify Saw Palm of acceptance elsewhere. Response time varies between 1 to 6 months. Our general reading period is between July 1st and October 1st, however submissions for Places to Stand in Florida are accepted year-round.

All submissions must be made electronically through our online submissions manager. Please upload prose and poetry files in .doc or .docx formats only. Art, photography, and comics should be uploaded in .jpeg / .jpg format only. Paper submissions sent via snail mail will be recycled unread. Click here to submit.

Poetry

We accept up to five poems per submission period at a maximum of 10 pages. Please send all poems in one document.

Fiction

We ask that fiction submissions be no longer than 6000 words. Please send only one story per reading period.

Flash Fiction

We accept up to three works of flash fiction (750 words or less) per submission period. Please send all stories in one document.

Creative Nonfiction

We ask that submissions of memoir and essays be no longer than 6000 words. Please send only one piece per reading period.

Art & Photography

We accept up to five submissions of art or photography per reading period. Please send files in .jpeg / .jpg format only. You may also include a URL if a portfolio of your work is online.

Comics

We welcome submissions of graphic fiction and nonfiction of up to seven pages, whether in black & white, greyscale, or full color. Submit in .jpeg / .jpg format only. Keep in mind that the journal's dimensions are smaller (5"x7") than the average literary journal and so comics with small panels filled with intricate art are not well-suited.

Interviews

We are especially interested in interviews of Florida writers and artists, although we're open to almost any Florida-related subject. Please query us about the interview subject first, via email.

Reviews (appear on sawpalm.org)

We are interested in reviews of any Florida-related subject: author, book, film, tourist attraction, CD, website, beach, park, toll roads, snack stands, local landmarks—anything! These reviews will appear on www.sawpalm.org. Unlike submissions of creative work, current or recent USF students and faculty are welcome to submit reviews. Size limit: 6000 words.

Places to Stand in Florida (appears on sawpalm.org)

Please tell us what it's like to stand at a specific place in Florida at a specific time of day in 500 words or less. While we enjoy the unusual, locations should be public and accessible (so not your bathroom!) Please include GPS coordinates.

Unlike other categories, current or recent USF students and faculty are welcome to submit pieces for the Places to Stand series.

Poems submitted as part of the Places to Stand series are welcome but should be justified left and otherwise not have complex formatting and spacing. This is due to technical limitations in Google Earth.

Update March 2016:

Sawpalm just released their 10th Anniversary Issue with the special theme—Florida-Cuba Connection.

They plan to return to the Florida theme for future issues. While submissions for the journal won't open until July 1st, they take submissions for the online literary map, "Places to Stand," year round. For this category, they accept short (500 word max) submissions of nonfiction and poetry that show what it's like to stand at a particular spot in Florida at a particular moment in time.

Words of Wisdom

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This month and next we are sharing the winning entries from our annual Short Story Contest.

2016 Annual Short Story Contest winners:

First Place: Creep by Andrew Parker  
 Second Place: Case Study 12 by Roberta Lee (Robin) Hughes  
 Third Place: Spiders & Snakes by Dona Lee Musitano  
 Hon Mention 1: The Long Shadow by Natalie Brown  
 Hon Mention 2: A Mother's Love by Elise Covino

This month we are publishing the top three winning stories and next month both Honorable Mentions will be published.

First Place:

**CREEP**

**By Andrew Parker**

Photo Prompts: Spider, Hitler

Lyrics from Radiohead's "Creep" popped into Langly's head.

I'm a creep, I'm a weirdo

Childhood jeers echoed from his past.

Spidey Boy! Spidey Boy!

With nervous fingers, he locked up his car and shuffled forward.

Don't rub your face.

But he did. And felt all the crazy angles of bone beneath his skin.

His grandfather, a holocaust survivor, insisted Langly was special.

You're Spider God. Someday you'll flash back in time and bury Hitler in a mountain of spiders. You'll make the Holocaust disappear like it never happened.

Growing up, Langly read lots of books about the horrible era. He examined photos of gas chambers and emaciated bodies. Most disturbing of all, though, was of Hitler sitting at a table looking up at his gazing admirers.

Why does evil wear a face of bliss?

As he approached his reflection on the bank door, his gangling, short-torsoed body announced his identity. He walked in. Uneasy faces turned his way.

He looked different. Thought different. His every action shouted "I'm different." Why was he born? Even animals born lame in the wild received the gift of death.

Langly got in the long line. By the time he reached the head of it, he trembled uncontrollably. He had to do it, though. But not then. He walked to the back of the line. Again and again. Until he stood alone. With a sick heart, he stepped up and handed over his note with a shaking hand: “Cooperate and everything will be fine. Give five hundred dollars to Langly Arachnon.”

The teller, Sensasia Synesthesia, was short, maybe thirty, had bobbed brown hair, and wore an earthy fragrance that lit up his empty life.

Her blue eyes pierced him from behind thick lenses. “Is this a joke?”

Langly felt his face turn red. He looked down and gripped the cool hardness of the counter. “Not a very funny one, apparently.”

Oh, no, my voice is shrill. Isn’t trying to be normal embarrassing enough? Must I always make a fool of myself? Yes, because my brain is three times too bizarre.

He grabbed his head to stop the stampede of buffaloes. “I mean, will you have ice cream with me sometime?”

There. I said it.

Her blue eyes opened wider. He wanted to run. But had to finish. “I mean, I’d love to share sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia with you sometime. Or brain freeze as they say in the business. Dan Ice Delight sells organic ice cream. The bean flecks of their vanilla flavor crunch in your mouth. Its deliciousness will linger in your olfactory memory forever.” She remained silent. “But you don’t have to if you don’t want to.”

She counted out his money.

Feeling utterly stupid, he took the bills. He was forty-two. Why wasn’t he a grownup yet? Why couldn’t he accept his reality? He looked at his receipt.

A handwritten phone number?

He looked up. And saw her tongue slid across her lips.

The next day, Langly and Sensasia stood beneath a boardwalk sheltered from the pouring rain. The walkway spiraled into an ice cream store set inside a cozy railcar station. Inside and out, each car displayed a different motif—Roaring-Twenties Paris, the Middle Ages, fifties New York, Ben Franklin’s Philadelphia, and many others. Delighted people stepped in to enjoy their exotic ice cream as they rolled at five miles-per-hour through five miles of old-growth forest along the Pacific coastline.

Langly scarcely noticed the rain or the long, slow line. He could only think about Sensasia sliding her tongue across her lips yesterday. He checked his watch. They’d been waiting half-an-hour. In silence!

Is she as shy as I am?

He inhaled her aroma. “I love your perfume. Smells natural.”

She kept staring ahead. “It should. I made it from natural ingredients.”

“Oh, really. Care to tell me how?”

She straightened her blue dress and stood taller in her red high heels. “No.”

Langly shivered. “Sorry about the rain and the long wait.”



She huffed.

He pulled out his wallet and counted out bills. "Here, let me make it up to you."

Her blue eyes burned into him. "Do you think I'm a prostitute?"

He froze and looked out at the rain-drenched sea. He put his wallet away and grabbed his head. "No, no, no. I'm confused. You handle money, and I thought . . ."

She scrunched her face. "Thought what?"

"In *The Sopranos*, they use money to resolve social conflicts."

She blinked. "You're guided by thugs on an old TV show?"

Why not stab me with a knife and get it over with?

"People like me have no social compass." He opened his umbrella. "I'll drive you home."

"We met here, remember?"

He closed his umbrella as he turned in a circle. "Of course. How could I forget? That's one of my problems. I remember everything."

The date was done. She had an umbrella. She could open it, walk to her car, and go home. He'd eat his ice cream alone as usual.

But she didn't budge. When the line moved, she stepped forward and looked back. "What kind of work do you do?"

Whoa.

He bounced forward. "I'm a bus driver for handicapped kids. My long arms are great for helping them in and out of the bus." He gulped when she looked down at his banana fingers dangling by his calves. "During the day, I'm a counselor."

She raised her eyebrows and turned away. Of course, she did. The freak show, the basket case of aberrant electrons, was an elementary school counselor. Parents should lock up their children. He still cringed from when the mother of autistic Mary Moor walked into his office, anxious to meet the "amazing" man who'd transformed her daughter's social skills. The moment she saw him, her smile dropped and her eyes rolled up into their sockets. His spidey arms barely caught her before she hit the floor.

He beamed. "I'm great with students." He frowned. "Not so much the parents."

Why is she so maddeningly silent? If all she wants is ice cream, she doesn't need me for that.

Finally, he'd had enough. "Why did you . . ." He shook his head. "Never mind."

Her blue eyes turned to him. "Agree to go out with you?" She looked away and then back. "Did you ever consider that I might be physically attracted to you?"

His eyes expanded. "Really?" He slumped. "No."

"I didn't think so."

Was she playing games? He had no idea. When they reached the big neon sign, Dan Ice Delight, a double door opened. As they walked in, his heart pounded with hope as his mind spun with confusion. Dan and Jane greeted them with teeth as white as their dazzling uniforms. Wavy black hair. Sculpted jaw. Body of a Greek god. Dan was the world's most perfect man. Except his dark glasses hid skin-covered sockets. Jane was gorgeous too. And she had eyes—big green

ones that sparkled among the limestone, marble, and glass works of the station. Dan had been going with Jane for two years. Much longer than usual. Perhaps at thirty-nine, he'd found his one-and-only.

"Hi, Langly," Dan said.

It never ceased to amaze Langly how Dan could see without eyes.

Dan turned to Langly's date. "Someone's with you this time. Hi, Sensasia."

"Hi, Dan," she said.

"You know him?" Langly asked.

Sensasia laughed. "Oh, yes."

Jane grinned. "What flavor ice cream would you like?"

Dan looked down at a panel of blinking buttons. "She's kidding. Only the best flavor is served here—vanilla crunch." He rubbed his square jaw and raised his immaculate eyebrows. "Let's see. What theme shall I give you?"

Langly spread his hands, but reminded of their size, he put them in his pockets. "Why not something cheerful, Dan? As you can see, I'm not alone this time."

He pushed a button. The wall slid open. The gloomy interior of a black railcar appeared.

Langly gasped. "For God's sake, not Plato's Cave again."

Jane spread her arms and smiled. "Enjoy."

Sensasia grabbed Langly's arm and pulled him forward. "Any man brave enough to ask out a girl the way you did shouldn't be afraid of a little old thing like Plato's Cave."

Langly followed her as if in a trance and sat beside Sensasia on a velvet seat. The doors closed. Mozart's "Requiem" stirred the air with morbid notes of genius. A light grew behind them. Shadows of ants appeared on the wall. One species invaded another, killed their queen, and took their eggs to hatch into slavery.

Like humans, some ants enslave other ants.

The railcar moved. Langly wanted to close his eyes but felt compelled to watch the debauchery. "I feel ill."

Sensasia's hand brushed his. "From the train moving?"

Did she touch me?

"No. The ants taking slaves. Dan knows I hate evil in animals."

Two bowls of ice cream materialized on a table before them. Sensasia picked up a bowl and inserted a spoonful of the black-dotted treat into her mouth. Slowly, she pulled out an empty spoon and sighed. "So good. You should try some, Langly."

Langly swallowed a spoonful. Its deliciousness melted into him and diffused into every cell of his body. His nausea vanished.

"Feel better?"

He released a slow breath. "Oh, yes." But he couldn't resist peering back at the ant shadows. "Plato said we see only the shadows of reality."

She ate another spoonful and leaned back, resting her hand beside his. "If shadows taste this yummy, that's fine by me."

He dared to touch her fingertips. “Me too. How long have you known Dan?”

She eased her hand into his. “He’s my brother.”

“Your brother?”

She pulled up his hand and traced her lips across it. “I like your hands. Nice and big. You know what they say about a man with big hands?”

“Big gloves?”

She smiled and leaned close. Her breath caressed his face as she spoke. “I helped my brother set up this place through the National Organization on Disability.”

“That’s amazing.”

She leaned closer and whispered in his ear. “Want to play the bird game?”

He shivered from her primal heat. “What’s that?”

“I’m mama bird. You’re baby bird.”

He swallowed. “Oh. Okay.”

She enveloped a spoonful and rested her chest against his. He felt her heart beat like a hummingbird as she gave him mouth-to-mouth ice cream with her slow moving tongue.

Mama bird pressed her cheek against baby bird. “Your turn.”

“I’ve never . . .”

“Never what?”

“Felt this good.”

He put ice cream in his mouth and placed it inside her parted lips. Their tongues tasted each other like animals in heat.

She turned away and laughed.

He froze. Was she playing games, after all? Of course. Why else the vexing, on-off reserve? Why would such a lovely woman go for a mutant like him? He looked back at the psychopathic ants and descended into Mozart’s gloom. His mind scrambled for intelligence. Had he, like a mayfly, blossomed in love, only to die like an insect?

Before he could sink further, her mouth shoved more ice cream into his. Her lungs heaving, she pressed her hot flesh against him, combed his hair with her fingers, stroked his face, his shoulders, his arms, his chest, and his growing libido.

He felt ready to explode.

The music changed to Mozart’s Symphony in G minor. Shadows of happy school children replaced the ants. Their seat slid out into a bed.

She smiled. “See? Dan approves.”

They slipped off each other’s clothes and embraced skin-to-skin in the semidarkness. She wrapped her arms and legs around him with unbelievable strength.

Everything welled up inside him. The taunts, stares, and pain from other people’s brains struck him like a meteor shower. “Why?”

She kissed his tears. “Remember when you opened your savings account?”

He shivered. “Two years ago. Everyone was staring at me.”

“Including me. You jerked your head away when you caught me looking at you.”

Why is she torturing me?

“Up until then, I’d dated a lot of handsome guys.”

Stop!

She straddled him and pressed her forehead against his, tickling him with her hair. “But I was bored of the same old blue sky. Then you came along and made my little schoolgirl heart flutter all the way down to my twinkle toes.”

“But I thought—”

She silenced him with her lips. “You were wrong.”

END

Second Place:

## CASE STUDY 12

by Roberta Lee (Robin) Hughes

It is the 12th of November and a purple contusion of cloud presses down. The wind is circling the house. Snow is imminent. I sit in my study thinking back over the day and warming myself with a cognac. I am going to write a medical case study for the Journal of Otolaryngology. I do not think they will publish it. The Submissions Review Board, of which Garrett (the sneak), is the Chair will not think it credible. (Even though they've published works of dubious scientific credential before.) So I will not give them the whole story. In fact, this diary only will know the full truth.

I must commit this entire story to paper tonight, as I come fresh from its dénouement, and time has not yet had a chance to smooth down the prickly edges. I feel an urgency to write.

Let me start with the patient, Vivian Manning. She was a young woman of money and hypochondria. She made a pesky habit of popping up over and over again with frivolous complaints: My appointment book would read: "Check lump in throat--having trouble singing." "Check echoing sound in ear." "Check earwax--slightly more yellow than usual."

Whenever I went to examine her, I found her to be coquettish and irritatingly familiar. She would allow her satin gown to fall off her shoulder, for instance, or she would wear a revealing low cut dress. After the exam, she would often leave provocative photos of herself in bed attire gazing out with half closed eyes. Most often, these were found by my nurse, Rebecca, or on one occasion by another patient, to my mortification. (No matter how much I vehemently denied any involvement with the woman, Rebecca continues to regard me with a knowing look--a smirk really--even to this day.)

Vivian was also an amateur writer, and sometimes her photos included a poem or an envelope with a short story.

She came to me one day about two years ago with the complaint of something in her ear. I suspected nothing unusual, based on the patient's history of hypochondria, but upon exam I was surprised to find that she was correct. There was something in her ear: a spider. It was approximately 1/2 centimeter in diameter, black, with quite a number of vibrissae on its abdomen. And it was alive! I saw it move back and forth near the tympanic membrane.

My face must have registered my feelings, for Vivian looked at me as if she were hoping for a reaction.

I mastered myself and turned to my treatment table where I chose a forceps, some gauze, and a cotton applicator stick soaked with lidocaine. Turning back to her and keeping my voice matter-of-fact, I said, "It appears that you do have something in your ear. I will remove it but you need to hold still and allow me to position your head on the headrest." I decided it might not be in the best interest of the patient to mention specifically what was in the ear.

But Vivian asked me directly. "What is in my ear? I can feel it moving around in there and rubbing against my eardrum. It makes a scratchy noise."

That mental image made me shiver. I turned back to my instruments and acted nonchalant. "Well, you have a spider in your ear. It must have crawled in when you were sleeping. I've heard of such things before. We will have it out in no time, don't worry." I half expected a scream followed by hysteria, but there was only silence.

Vivian was looking at me thoughtfully. "I think I'll leave it," she said.

"Nonsense," I said. "What are you talking about? You can't leave a spider in your ear."

"I think I will leave it in my ear. It's been in there for two days now and I've never had so many good ideas for stories. Perhaps this is my artistic muse. It whispers ideas into my ear."

"Now Vivian. You simply cannot leave a spider in your ear. I worry about inflammation that may result from the spider's movements, and there is the possibility that it could bite you."

"No, I most definitely want to leave it," she said as if she didn't hear me. "Remember the composer Shostakovich? A piece of shrapnel entered his brain during the war and he credited that with a burst of creativity. He composed hundreds of his best works during that time."

She rose to go. I must say, I had never seen her so resolute and clear-eyed. She picked up her purse and swept past me. "Thank you, Dr. Ergebauer." And she was gone.

(By the way, you must know that I documented the hell out of this case. I made Vivian sign multiple documents verifying that she declined treatment. I know those worms--our good lawyers--would enjoy getting their little maggot hooks into a piece of meat like this.)

Time passed and I thought of Vivian's case only sporadically, until one day I was perusing the morning paper and saw an article on her new success as a writer. Apparently, she had won the prestigious Norworthy Award for Fiction. I don't read a lot of fiction; mostly preferring historical non-fiction or biography, which explains why I hadn't observed her catapult to fame.

She had also begun calling herself "Vivienne" and dropped her last name entirely.

That afternoon, I visited the bookstore for some evening reading. It was easy to find her books: they were heaped in a mountainous display. I loaded up on four titles and hurried home to sit with them before the fire. My thought was to skim through, as if I were reading a Journal

article. But I ended up reading every word. I was captivated; held hostage really, and ended up reading late into the night. Her writing was full of wit and charm, if not a bit of agitation and even mania. But a delightful mania. I read *Portulaca Summer*, which won the Norworthy Award. I read *Fort Firefly*, a children's book, and *Gentle Brookfall*, a romance. Finally, there was Professor Ergebauer and the Questing Tree, another children's book, for which, by the way, I had not given permission for the use of my name.

Then, in the spring, Vivian came to my office for an ear exam.

"It's no longer in my ear, " she said as a greeting. "But it's still there, somehow. I can feel it."

Vivian's manner had changed. Gone was the coquette and the flirty eyes. Here was someone not playful, but cold. Gone was that innocent naughtiness and in its place something like calculation. She didn't smile at me. She didn't leave photos and poems in my exam room.

The spider had progressed into the middle ear through the tympanum. "Vivian," I said, "this thing has to be removed today. I cannot let you continue on with a spider deep in your ear. I'm sure you have significantly diminished hearing on this side, to say the least."

"Thank you, Doctor, but I'm leaving it there. I'm having even better ideas for writing now. Deeper thoughts, unusual voices, strange and wonderful sensations. I can't stop now. I have so much to write."

Her work now turned dark. I followed it, intrigued by what was unfolding. She wrote of crimes, tales of suspense, fear, and horror. I read everything she wrote. I couldn't help it: *The Drowning Pond*, *Divestiture of Evil*, *Cruel and Tender Moon*.

I lost track of Vivienne for a while after I took on Daniel Young as my partner. He was eager, but somewhat inept, especially in the handling of the Lewandowski case. Good thing I was paying attention, because she would have lost her hearing if I hadn't intervened.

Be that as it may, one afternoon I saw Vivian's name on my schedule. If I hadn't been expecting her, I wouldn't have recognized the anemic woman in my exam room. She was thin, pale, haunted. Her hair was unkempt and stray, her clothes ill-fitting and shiny from wear. I thought she looked deranged. Her hand kept covering her one ear in a sort of protective gesture. This mannerism repeated every thirty seconds or so throughout the interview. Furthermore, she held her head tilted toward the left side. The left eyelids were drooping but not closed. The muscles of the left side of her face drooped, and her smile was crooked; characteristic of paralysis of the facial nerve secondary to middle ear trauma.

Vivienne fell as she attempted to settle herself into the exam chair. I caught her. "Have you fallen before this?" I asked.

"I lose my balance often now," she responded in a mechanical tone. "It seems to be worsening."

My exam was brief. I had already seen enough to assess her condition. "The foreign body (*somehow I couldn't bring myself to say spider*) has moved into the inner ear now. This is

causing you balance problems, and I've no doubt your hearing is permanently impaired. You have Bell's palsy because there was damage to one of the nerves that controls the facial muscles. This thing has gone beyond the reach of my forceps and my skill. I can't get it out now."

"Oh, I don't want you to take it out." A glint of the old Vivian smiled at me. "I have so much more writing to do."

There are certain patients that I wash my hands of. They do not follow doctor's orders and they disagree with professional opinion. Vivienne had become such a patient. I was done with her.

"Well," I said, turning away. "I have enjoyed reading your work, but I must say your success has come at great cost to your health."

She smiled again, sadly, I thought, and struggled to her feet. I helped her up, and she stood there swaying for a moment. "I still have a masterpiece to write." She bumped into the doorframe on her way out and was gone. I never saw her alive again.

Months passed and then two things happened. I read in the paper that a new work, *Moth to the Light*, had been published by local author Vivienne, and that it was favored to win the Pilstrom Award for Science Fiction and Horror. Blechner Studios had already snapped up the movie rights. The story was about a woman who hallucinates that she is turning into a spider.

On the same day, I received a call from the county coroner. Vivienne had died and he wanted me there for the autopsy, knowing I was her only physician.

[The case study will end here. The following account will not be included because of its bizarre and preternatural character.]

I have not participated in many autopsies outside of medical school. I gowned, masked, and gloved. The room was lit brightly, and the floors were wet from hosing down after the last procedure. All was metal and concrete, shiny and hard, like an abattoir. Vivienne lay naked on the table. Her body was shriveled--even wrinkled, as if the thin skin had been pulled away from the underlying muscle. The skin was a parchment color, and appeared exceedingly thin.

Cory greeted me and thanked me for coming. Cory Felman. I wrote his recommendation for medical school. Still, it is hard to stop seeing him as a seven year old kid playing with toy trains on my rug. It seems to me that a pathologist should have wrinkles instead of smooth skin on his face.

"I wanted you here since you are the only physician who is familiar with the case," he said. "Furthermore, I think this will be a most unusual autopsy. The body is very lightweight. Weighing only 32 pounds. And there is this." He turned the body over and motioned to a line running from back of the neck to coccyx. It reminded me of a seam in a shirt. "And also here." He parted the hair on the back of the head and I saw the line extending up the back of the skull.

Returning the body to face up, he chose a necropsy knife and inserted it over the sternum and in one smooth stroke opened the body to the pubis. The knife encountered no resistance and sank in to the hilt as it cut.



The knife came out clean. No blood or tissue clung to the blade. Cory opened the incision with gloved hands and we looked into an empty cavity. Devoid of organs, blood, bone, fluid, the body was nothing but a dry husk. The seam on the other side of the body split apart under this manipulation and we found ourselves looking through an empty shell at the table.

I stepped back involuntarily. For a moment, I struggled with an odd sense of familiarity in my subconscious. Where had I seen this before?

"It's what an arthropod does when it grows--it sheds its skin. Ecdysis is the term," said Cory Felman. "Like a shrimp or a cicada. Like a crab."

"Like a spider, " I said.

Epilogue: Four months later, a brief article in the paper made mention of receipt of a manuscript by Harrogate and Sons (Vivienne's publisher). The author claimed to be Vivienne, and indeed the writing style and subject matter were like hers. The book, Transformation of the Spider, chronicled a woman's descent into insanity.

I have yet to read it. I will wait for a night when the sky is inflamed and the wind screams in pain. Only when Nature is in agony, will I receive Vivienne again into my thoughts.

END

Third Place:

## SPIDERS & SNAKES

By Dona Lee

The first day of summer recess the sun beat down on us and warmed the soil beneath our feet as we raced across the field.

"I claim Blue Boy," Sammy shouted. His carrot-colored hair shone in the sun like Gram's copper-bottomed pots after their polishing.



"Not if I get there first." I pumped my legs even harder and managed to pass him, getting to the tractor three strides ahead of my best buddy.

"Darn it, Mason. You beat everyone. "

"True that." My heart pounded from the exertion, but I felt on top of the world. Poor Sammy needed to lose a couple pounds before he could keep up with me. Short and just a bit pudgy, athletics weren't his thing. "But you claimed it first, so you can ride Blue Boy. I'll take Mr.

Green Jeans.” The tractors started up and we headed out single file to the road shoulder headed for the deli. Ahead of me I saw Sammy bounce off his seat when he hit a bug rut.

I shouted out, “But I’m not letting you drive my car when I get one. You drive worse than old man Carmichael.”

“Do not!”

Twenty minutes later we sauntered in to Deli Delights, rulers of our world with the whole day ahead of us. Our friend Kyle occupied one of the picnic tables on the patio, where he scrunched over his tablet, his dark horn-rimmed glasses sliding down his nose, a lock of his hair falling across his forehead. He reminded me of a geeky Clark Kent.

“Dude,” I called out as we grabbed some sandwiches at the counter.

He looked up, nodded and scooped over, making room for us. Sammy slid in next to Kyle and nudged him. Kyle lifted his head out of the cloud. “What’s the plan, Sam?”

I sat across from them. Sammy’s freckles brightened in the gleam of his ear-to-ear grin. “How bout we go over to Marshal’s Landing?”

“Isn’t that where the gator ate Susan’s dog last year?” Kyle asked.

“Well, yeah, but they don’t bother people, too much trouble,” I said. “Sides, my dad’s got a boat we can use to go down to Jigg’s Landing. Won’t even need to get wet if’n you don’t want to.” I looked directly at Kyle. “I know how you hate getting your SurfacePro wet.”

“Up yours,” Kyle said. “Cost more than your daddy’s boat. And I can’t see a bloody thing without my glasses, so I hate swimming.”

Sammy stared over my shoulder, his face paled. “Don’t turn around,” he hissed. “Oz just pulled up next to our rides. “ He took a deep shuddering breath. “Oh, fuck. He’s coming in.”

“No Problem, we’ll just take the side door and head for Marshal’s. You in Kyle?” I asked.

“Sure. I’m with whoever’s driving Blue.”

“Hey, what’s wrong with Green Jeans?” I dumped our garbage in the can by the door before trailing after Sammy and Kyle, waving to Mac behind the counter. “He’s sturdy and always starts.”

“I lose my stomach on that rattle bucket every time. Blue rides way smoother,” Kyle said.

We all ignored Oz’s ATV as we headed back onto the road. Dad’s boat took about a half hour to put in the water. We held it upside down and shook out lots of leaves, put it in the water and Voila! No leaks. I grabbed the paddles, life vests, some poles and the tackle box and we headed down stream.

“Gator!” Sammy shrieked like a girl as we passed a six footer on the bank. His scream disturbed the gator and it slunk into the river disappearing beneath the surface. Sammy freaked out even more and sidled up against me instead of continuing to stroke.

Kyle shook his head in disapproval. “Yo, idget. You scared it and now you have us going in circles. You want to get away from it start pulling, you are worse than my little sister.”

Sammy’s eyes were showing white as he twisted and turned, but he scooted back to his side and started rowing again. “But where is it?”

“Hiding from you,” I said. “Your scream scared it. Besides, you’re way too big for a little gator to eat.

“Hmmpphh.”

We glided slowly down the river watching fish disappear in and out of the shadows of the tea-colored water. The underbrush on the banks rustled once in a while as critters burrowed deeper to avoid our gaze. We talked quietly about fishing, our band, Kyle’s girlfriend moving away, and our relief at finally not having to get up before the sun rose.

Spanish moss hanging from the oaks swayed above our heads, in some cases hanging so low we used the paddles to push it out of our path. I noticed a few more gators basking on the banks, but Sammy either didn’t see them or knew better than to scare them again. I noticed him watching the river like a hawk but he slowly relaxed as the peace of the river took over.

As we rounded a bend, Kyle used his paddle to slow the boat down and pointed up the bank ahead. A small family of deer grazed in the bushes. “Wow, I always thought Florida deer were smaller,” I said.

“You were probably thinking of Key Deer. They’re the size of a medium dog. These are regular white tails. My uncle gets so mad at ’em cause they are always getting into his garden and destroying his tomatoes and corn, and my aunt’s prize impatiens,” Kyle explained.

The deer raised their heads and watched us carefully as we passed them by. “I never saw them except in books,” Sammy whispered, not wanting to spook them. “They are pretty cool.”



A minute later, they looked up river and with their tails flicking they disappeared into the trees. We heard the growl of a small motor boat approaching from behind us and continued rowing towards Jiggs Landing. “Motor boaters don’t realize how much they miss. The fish and the animals flee whenever they hear them. They always complain about not catching any fish.”

Sammy laughed at Kyle’s remark. “Yeah, like Ozzy last year at the tournament. Brought in a little one pound bass. All three of us had over five pounders. Boy was he ticked.”

“It was his own fault. He thought his daddy’s bass boat would help. Raced across the lake and scared every fish within vibration distance,” I said. “Such a jerk.” The noise behind us increased. “Actually, sounds like a bass boat coming downriver.”

Sammy looked behind us. “Not just any bass boat. It’s Ozzy.”

“Damnation,” Kyle said. “Row toward shore. He will probably swamp us with his wake. Such a freaking jerk.”

We pulled hard, bringing the boat into the shallows where we put her nose on the soft sand of the bank. Sure enough, Oz deliberately sped up to increase his wake. A few waves breached the side. He laughed as he continued on down river.

“Let’s bail before we go any further,” Sammy said. “I am in no hurry to catch up to that jerk.”

I picked up a cup and started tossing the water out of the hull. “He bullies you because you react so strongly. You have to stand up to him to make it stop. Besides, you will feel better about yourself if you do.”

“You know, Mason, sometimes your preaching pisses me off. The jerk outweighs my by like eighty pounds. He stuffed me in my locker two years ago. It’s not easy to stand up to someone like that.”

“Sorry. Guess I don’t get it. I was never a shrimp like you.” I grinned to let him know I was joking with him not at him.

Still serious, he nodded back. “Exactly.”

We slowly continued on our trek and approached Jiggs Landing thirty minutes later. We noticed Oz’s boat tied up at the dock, so we veered around and nosed our flat bottomed boat up onto the shore. The Fish Camp had cold drinks and snacks as well as the shiners we planned on buying, so we headed that way first. Sammy asked me to do an Oz check before going in. I peeked in and gave the “All Clear.”

“He must of stopped to use the loo,” Kyle said. Sammy kept his gaze moving ensuring he wouldn’t be attacked unaware.

“Chill, man,” I said. He won’t attack you when there are three of us and only one of him.”

Kyle gave me a couple bucks and handed over the bait bucket. The clerk filled it up and took our money and we headed out for our favorite fishing hole. Oz was getting back in his boat and watching us as we pushed offshore. As we passed, I saw him reach over and grab a bait bucket. He opened it and flung the contents at our boat. Something black and hairy fell on the seat next to me.

“Arrgghh,” I yelled. “It’s a freaking spider!” *Okay, I didn’t say freaking.* I fell backwards and almost cracked my head on Kyle’s bench-seat.

Oz laughed his ass off.

Kyle pushed his glasses back up his nose and investigated the creature. The fall must have stunned or killed it because it was nearly motionless, a leg jerking in and out. He pulled a knife out of the tackle box and poked it. “I think it’s a tarantula.”



“Is it dead?” I asked.

“I don’t think so.” He poked it again. It drew in its legs and curled up. “Nope. Have we got anything to put it in?” He spotted the paper bag holding our drinks and snacks. “Empty that out and I’ll slide it in. We can fasten it closed with a couple hooks.”

“You sure?”

Sammy looked at me a small grin on his face. "You afraid of spiders? Never thought I would see the day." He emptied the bag and offered it to Kyle.

Using the knife, Kyle slipped it into the bag, turned down the top, and set it down next to the bait bucket.

I stared as slight movement within rustled sending shivers down my spine and raising goosebumps on my arms and neck. "Maybe, a little. Damn thing is creepy as hell. Put it on the front bench where I know it's not near me, okay."

They both laughed and did as I requested. I shot Oz the bird and we continued on our fishing trip. Fishing was great. We caught a few four and five pound bass and let them go, six cat fish we kept for dinner, and not one of us got speared by their spikes. We caught plenty of sunnies, but they're garbage fish and we tossed them all back, upset at their taking our bait and wasting our time. We finished our drinks and decided to call it a day.

Rowing up river is a little more effort than floating down, but the Braden River doesn't have a strong current and the tide was with us. We rowed a bit harder, exerting our energy into the paddling and leaving talking for later. Likely that is the reason we failed to keep our eyes peeled for Oz.

He must have set up his trap and waited for hours for our return. We rounded a bend and the bass boat engine fired up, startling the birds resting in the trees. Kyle headed us for the bank but it was too late. Oz surged past us, the wake rocking our boat wildly. I managed to grab a low branch and kept us from flipping, although water lapped over the sides soaking our shoes.

Kyle swore and grabbed his Surface Pro in its water resistant case and tucked them inside the cooler. "I hope it floats if he comes back and capsizes us." We listened as the engine noise faded away.

"What a jerk," Kyle said. Sammy nodded in agreement.

"Ever wonder why he acts like that?" I asked.

"No," they both replied in unison.

I cringed as the bag up front rattled vigorously and edged along the bench. "The wake must have revived it."

Sammy grabbed the cooler and a can of soda and put them on each side of the bag. "That should keep him from falling off," he said.

"What are you saving him for?" I asked.

"Heard they make pretty good pets," he said with a sly grin. "No, Mason, I'm not keeping him. But they sell for upwards of thirty dollars."

"And you know this why?" I asked.

Before he could answer we heard a splash up ahead and a shout for help. "Did that sound like?"

"Yeah. Probably another trick," Kyle said. "Heads up, be ready for anything." We rowed harder and as we passed under a low hanging oak branch we saw Oz's bass boat lying on its side. The Oak roots had snagged the engine and stopped it in its tracks, throwing everything, Oz included into the river.

Sammy laughed seeing Oz hanging on a branch, his feet dangling inches from the water, a full twenty-feet from the bank. He stopped laughing when he realized Oz had company.

“Quite the predicament he’s in, isn’t it?” Kyle said. “I wonder how long he can hang there?”

“Guys, cut it out. This isn’t funny,” Oz cried. “Help me out.”

“Oh, hell, no,” Sammy said. “Let the gators have at him.”

I looked at Sammy. “Really? Can you really leave him? There are at least three gators in the water and two of them are over ten feet.” I looked him in the eyes. “If we leave him, I don’t know if help will get back in time. Can you live with that?”

Sammy stared at the gators gliding beneath Oz’s dangling feet, then off into the distance. “Fuck you, Oz.”

Oz cried out at his outburst and started blubbing.



Sammy looked back at me. “I hate his guts, but I would hate myself more if I let the gators get him. Go ahead and get him down.”

We rowed the boat under the limb, the gators sliding away as we closed in. Sammy looked at the biggest one and shuddered. As Oz dropped into the boat, we rocked wildly.

Oz started to sit on our bench seat but Sammy pointed to the front. “Next to the spider, jerk.”

He nodded his head and sat shoulders hunched and stared balefully at the wrecked bass boat as we pulled away. “My dad’s gonna kill me. Mighta been better if’n I’d been gator bait.” He looked at Sammy next. “You’re a better man, than I’ll ever be.”

Sammy grunted and turned his head away. “Don’t mean I’ll ever forgive you, Osbourne. You’re scum.”

I patted Sammy on the back. “Good job, Sam. Good job.”

We headed back to Mason’s Landing.

END

That’s all for this month. Hope you enjoyed it.

Dona Lee  
“Plotting Success”

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