

AND THEN...

A SHORT STORY BY:
JOHNNY E. MAHAFFEY WRITING AS
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AND *THEN* it all started--or ended--when Westlow High's history guru Mr. Galloway asked Alice to meet him after class, she knew to expect trouble, so it was no surprise that , upon arrival, something wasn't quite right--every window had its shade down, and closed. Not exactly unusual for most buildings in Gothenburg, or the "Burg," as they all called it; but the school was usually not all shut up, nervous and sanatorium-like with something to hide.

Maybe it was the heat, she thought, it was hot, and the closed shades certainly helped. But it wasn't the heat; her moment of expected surrender had arrived, and it would be in everyone's best interest not to resist.

AND *THEN* her suspicions were justified when Galloway looked to her, she knew that look. She seen it every time her mom's Scottish terrier locked his two beady eyes, fixated, on the neighbor pug's third. It was a sickness of Nature, a biological thirst, an epidemic with her its cure. Or, at least, that's how the infected wish to make people think.

AND *THEN* when Galloway spoke, all she heard was the panting of a heated, eye-balling little Scottish terrier, trapped in a man's body.

AND *THEN* after a ten-minute perditional stretch of time, subjected to Galloway's usual empty and irrelevant chatter, with sly comments of her drug use scattered within, he did it: the little deviant terrier rubbed his wagging lipstick against her under the ruse of "dropped" papers from his desk. Her thin skinned Aeropostle cargos offering practically no blockage to his trespass. Her stomach souring at the thought of what possible fantasy he'd gratified with his *little* probing.

AND *THEN* after she'd told him she needed to be on her way, he really *did* look like her mom's terrier--the day he'd felt the pinch of the vet's blue ball shears.

AND *THEN* when she made the parking lot, there was Autumn in Alice's car, as usual, alone with figments of her love-deprived mind.

"That was quick," Autumn announced, smirking with knowledge of the after-class stay. Alice just looked at her, giving her the usual change-the-subject-or-I-kick-you-in-the-ovaries stare she was told she did so well she must've been born with it. Autumn knew the deal: don't comply; don't ride!

AND *THEN* on the way to Autumn's trailer, all the way in the far reaches of Travel-land Park (the Burg's biggest trailer gathering in the state since the fall of Anderson)--her car was forced to grind undercarriage with the huge concrete speed-bump any self-respecting car loathed to straddle. The one Autumn adeptly called: Galloway's lap.

Alice could almost see it--why a girl might lose hope, or even, flip a crazy switch like Jainee Spencer, who now resided within the old sanatorium ... safe from the voices and the "Vamps" she claimed to be lurking within the Burg's shadows and even its Fog.

Especially the Fog.

Autumn was no Jainee, but still Alice had worry, the girl had it rough, to say the least: A mother that ran her father off while she and Alice were both still toddling around. Her mother, the great self-proclaimed "swinger" of Travel-land Park. Autumn's childhood trips to out-of-town sitters while another of her siblings-to-be got *scraped* out of her mother's rancid womb; each from a different so-called "paramour" and of a different make. Her mother's boyfriend/girlfriend cycle running faster than Autumn's Tampax could sneeze.

"I'm doin' it for my little girl," her mother would claim, "I *date* so much because I wanta find 'r a daddy."

Mother inadvertently training daughter.

Daughter following mom's headboard notches, searching for dad.

AND *THEN* Alice watched while Autumn disappeared with a wave, a smile, and a trail of cigarette smog.

AND *THEN* Alice is at *Connor Collin's Pizzeria* waiting for fresh Shirley Bread, diet aside, when she noticed Tomika Mason slip her big brown, jean-eating buns into the walk-in cooler in quest for some much needed supply, garlic butter perhaps. Tomika, Alice mused, probably never really slipped into (or out of) anything, unnoticed in her life. Though, the weight didn't really seem to fit her frame.

AND *THEN* suddenly Alice remembers that Tomika *hadn't* always been quite so robust, in fact, not until after she had taken one of the special "advanced" classes of Galloway's, two years prior.

That was when Tomika seemed to suddenly balloon out.

It was also the time she conformed to the Burg's Goth-Wiccan-Vamp culture, joining the very coven that had cast out Jainee Spencer.

Tomika's not-so-bemused silent look, answered Alice's suspicions. Confessions were all over town, visible to those that looked, buried in the shallow graves of people's projected-public-selves. Just how many? Alice figured she probably didn't really want to know, and even decided to backpedal her assumptions slightly and kept a friendly,

unassuming attitude to the girl miscast--not to mark her, or put her in an exposed place. The last thing Alice needed was some curse cast upon her.

AND *THEN* curiosity sends Alice to see what she considered to be an elephant that dreamed of being a mouse (A lot of mice have the dream of being an elephant, it's the Capitalist's way, but, few, if any, elephants wish openly to be mice, and those that did usually found themselves without pack or herd.).

The dreamer--Alicia "Andy" Moss--lived in Earl's Glenn, a high end subdivision in, and around, Donehue Gold Course, the abode of Westlow envy. Entering the gate, with its "top secret" code of an ingenious 1-2-3-4, Alice wondered if by any chance that Andy had ever stayed, after.

AND *THEN* when Alice was kindly told to leave, she had a better understanding of just how much loose dirt covered the town.

AND *THEN* as she thought of the Burg's occult (e.g., black magick; superstitions; ancient curses; evil spirits in the Fog), unearthly, unhuman things said to exist, maybe to give credence or blame--but there was nothing preternatural about Westlow High, or its little terrier, only his sick mind haunted the halls.

AND *THEN* over the next few months: there was polyamorous Judy; there was Amber; there was the sapphicly-confused Monica and Sera; there was Caitlin; there was even the exchange student Majena Hernandez from Andes in Cuba, whose family moved abruptly to Southern California a short time after *her* turn with Westlow's little after-hours terrier.

AND *THEN* there was, out of his apparent fear of the large and enraged relatives of the Hernandezas, a time of abstemiousness and solitude; though Alice and the others still eyed the sniffing little terrier suspiciously, knowingly--taking meticulous note. He still

dared to frequent student locales, strutting, looking for a spot to mark anew--his own--one leg ready to raise at a panty's notice.

Going to Timberpond?

Avoid the house with the dilapidated "vintage" Firebird, the one with the oddly tinted windows and "Carrie" vanity tag. His home an embuscade of spun web, in wait of amenable teens for his venomous thirst. No words given; only gloom--silent foreboding gloom--as he wait in reliance of the Westlow High moral standard to serve him once again. Weekend party-pad with his pot and kegs galore.

Thirst for thirst; tit for tat.

Said the spider to the baby fly.

All leverage for his overtures.

AND *THEN* the familiar titillating tug, a new potential exploit presenting herself in the form of a new introvert student--her submission portentously imminent. The pheromones of puberty abloom too strong for his unnatural celibacy.

AND *THEN* the most painfully imagined looks of exhortation.

AND *THEN* as months past, well into the second semester; the existential quantifier finally presented itself in the form of a slowly swelling Westlow High tummy--the Belly of Shame. Not a sole pupil judged the toll of Rachel Waters waddling her way down halls.

AND *THEN* there was the funeral ... the surprise that was not all that surprising--tragic--sad--but not a total shocker, as Michael and Jessie Waters cut the Dollar-General-nylon-rope suspending their baby girl's ripened premaritally-preeclamptic body.

AND *THEN* the inquiry of police detectives, a precedural courtesy, not much more: "suicidal tendency apparent." The basic go-to psychosocial expectation--girl moves to town, girl meets boy, girl dispatches unwanted pregnancy.

They'd seen it before, and would again.

AND *THEN* Galloway begins to preen his old forgotten THC-induced smile, all forbearance lost. A slave, succumbing to his sickness.

AND *THEN* Patricia Wilderbea goes missing. Posters are hung about, TV and radio coverage incites public eye, but in all the wrong directions. A mother's boyfriend/paramour/fiance-with-wife is questioned with the usual molester expectations, alleged--then exonerated by erectile dysfunction; lack of evidence; and police stupidity driving rumors rampant via the societal steroid known as: *The Gothenburg Independent* newspaper.

AND *THEN* at *Milliways* (the restaurant at the end of the Burg's boundary) a locuacious couple reading an article catches the eye of a burger eating Alice. The heading on their small device's screen both discernible and jaw dropping: CHILD MOLESTER TEACHER FIGHTING EXTRADITION AND CHARGES!

She immediately checked her phone's browser. It seemed, by journalistic enlightenment that Galloway had been arrested in Key Largo with a new young "paramour" (seeing the word of topic for her last psychology essay, Alice cringed at its use--paramour--the go-to word made fashionable by the local Solicitor in place of mistress, skank, cheater, whore, and all around easy lay, in an attempt to somehow entitle the "other woman" with, what, honor? His new replacement wife however was no paramour at all, a mere child of fifteen; and the Solicitor refers to her through news as Galloway's paramour as if the word was some legally accepted blanket term for objects of sexual indecency.

Florida authorities, unlike South Carolina, made an arrest of the Russian fingered teacher, intending to make another example. Thus, forcing the Burg's "authorities" to search the Galloway home in Timberpond subdivision, finding its basement to have a hidden child-porn cache, and the old "classic" car to contain an array of video cameras behind its dark windows, pointing at neighboring yards and windows.

AND *THEN* indiscretion after indiscretion slowly exposed itself as each young victim grew a tongue that Galloway had not come to fully know or expect, each adding to the Pile of Extent to show the saddled gratifications of Galloway's quest.

The Solicitor's soap opera dominates the news.

Westlow classes go on.

AND *THEN* Galloway's class has a new teacher, this time female. Photos of Rachel Waters and Patricia Wilderbea cover school halls, roadside billboards, and still, classes go on.

AND *THEN* Alice's procrastinatory habits have her behind on studies. She turns to the net for inspiration--they're no closer to finding Patricia Wilderbea, but more importantly, and horrific, Galloway was out on bond, he had then violated that bond, and a man- perv-hunt ensued.

AND *THEN* Alice can't escape the face of Galloway, his old bechestered mug everywhere she turned. She found him at the Burg's library--as usual--and at the stores, the mall, EVERYWHERE. She even found him in a gas station ladies room by the highway: his image pasted up on the mirror with his beady-little-eyes making it hard for her to pee.

AND *THEN* a cop with a face like a Chester white pig came to the school, snorting as a guest during Sexual Education Awareness (Galloway's Roman hands being the overriding topic).

Galloway takes over school news, and guys even change doing the "doggie" to doing the "Galloway Gallop." Girls are not amused.

AND *THEN* the child-friend of Galloway recovered upon his Florida arrest is found to posses a ring once gifted from Eric Wilderbea to his now-believed-to-be-dead daughter.

AND *THEN* with more months gone, and with Fall upon the Burg,

Fog and tornadic warning sirens corrosively filled the airways. Another Westlow year well past started as old postings fade, billboards get vandalized, and Capitalism once again reclaims.

The Burg turns its head in prep of Fall Fog and Fateful fortune befalls Alice: she finds Galloway, one town away, in the old ruins of Anderson, teaching an adult education class. There's a fuzzy molestor's style goatee and lots of equally fuzzed hair in a girl-style ponytail, but Alice knows it's him.

She'd never mistake the odd peculiarities of his mannerisms. They'd seemed to her even more apparent in his fall, unsure of himself, unbalanced with a sick failure, consumed by not guilt, but shame.

Shame that he'd been caught, not of what he'd done.

Exposed, unemployable as a teacher.

Unwanted as a human.

AND *THEN* Galloway pulls to the side of an empty highway of the Burg's outskirts, right where he'd been instructed ... excited for an upcoming fix, inappropriately planned by his Lolita-dreamgirl.

AND *THEN* when he casts his gaze upon Alice's golden locks: she sported a complete outfit of pedophilic-cosplay befitting to her name; a blue and white dress, with child's pinafore, and a small stuffed white bunny in tow for good measure.

AND *THEN* as he rounded to help her in, he knelt to playfully examine a comically large clock hung upon one of her American Apparel knee-socks, he was met with sudden pain and hot pressure in his head, followed with wetness and dizzy confusion.

Or, at least, this is what Alice figured as she tossed the bloody hammer-hiding bunny on the ground beside him.

AND *THEN* as the dirt from Alice's shovel covered all but his golden showered face, she paused, the spade's shaft firmly in hand, and her thoughts adrift. She thought of when he'd fictitiously dropped

his papers. He'd taken what he wanted without asking, insulting her intelligence, assuming she'd comply. Well, that was fine with her, she *assumed* he'd like to be covered up before the predicted tornado hit.

Thankfully she had less work to do with Donehue Gold Course's fairways being expanded, meaning construction of more signature yellow "golden" bricked cartways, or whatever they called them. New construction trails led her winding behind a clubhouse where gold bricks were stacked in wait of the prepped path ahead of them. It was brilliant, workers would continue their brickwork *atop* of hers. No golfer would ever dream of the secret beneath the Wizard's feet. The secret she had dug across the putting green (she knew a few golf terms, there were signs), using a Club Car shaped like a pink Cadillac.

She'd considered the pond, even one of the sand traps, but the irony of a yellow bricked road was too much to resist. Not to mention convenient, the dirt already loose, and the storm out to wash away trace evidence--it was brilliant. Galloway's SUV by the highway would be discovered of course, but not many, if anyone, would care. Most *she* knew would give, her a metal.

AND *THEN* movement to the right of her peripheral vision caused her heart to feel as if it had literally *stopped*. All of the Burg's superstitions were taking a toll on her--it was just a dog, it had to be.

AND *THEN* she wasn't alone: a somehow sanatorium-less Jainee Spencer stood watching, smiling, like some horrid specter.

WORD FIND

ALICE AND JAINEE SEE THE DEAD
 OMAGICK MOON UNOLHOE A PARAMOUR MEE
 BELLY AOVONETONE ONRORMEHOFTWUDD
 LUDONDESEN LUNOCULANOPSICLIESFO
 AOROOIAAPNOMNOTENIORIPSROMSEUP
 MPOGNLTRGLDNNWRPSYCHRAPEUBTDZH
 ERNARLOAKLAROF AIRWAYESAPVELNZI
 LEOLOAILLOS YENCNONONSSNUAROUYL
 AMILMCTPIOTEODOOTCHAUDOOMPWSGE
 MAFOGODISTNSXNMILLIWAYSOPONEOS
 EROWNONOF TAWIYPOLYAMOROUSNODOT
 OINA OCTOCEII OALENCHHAMMERDNODP
 GTOYGCEHORDCNWEEDOOONHONONSICK
 AADDOUXSRRVCKDXOTOGNRTAMPAXRED
 RLUUOLCTNISATAONOIPASRYFSNEEZE
 LLCCSTIEEEANLESIENOHMEOEFCLUMP
 IYKKENTRGRATIFIEDONOIYIRSEICKY
 CONNORCOLLINSPIZZERIALILLYYGOO

OED*
 LOLITA
 -ALICE
 -AND
 POLYAMOROUS
 GOTH
 WICCAN
 -JAINEE
 UNWANT
 MONOGAMY
 MAHAFFEY
 -SEE
 THE
 GRATIFIED
 MAGICK
 BELLY

AUTUMN
 DARKO
 OCCULT
 VAMPS
 TRESPASS
 BURG
 MILLIWAYS
 WESTLOW
 FAIRWAY
 CONNORCOLLINSPIZZERIA
 TIMBERPOND
 VAMPIRES
 FOG
 GALLOWAY
 CADILLAC
 HAMMER

SERA
 TAMPAX
 SNEEZE
 FLOU [French]
 GARLIC
 ELECTRACOMPLEX
 COSPLAY
 PREMARITALLY
 SICK
 PARAMOUR
 FUZZY
 TERRIER
 LIPSTICK
 DEAD
 R.I.P.
 PEDOPHILE

* Oxford English Dictionary

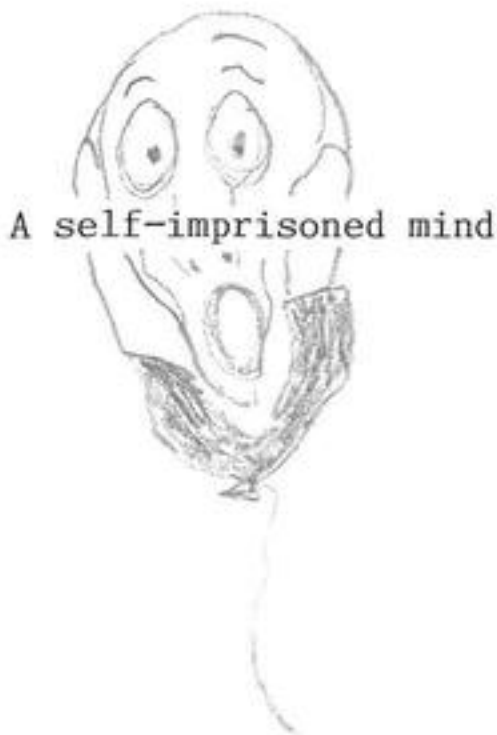
A NOTE FROM THE WRITER

At first glance, my writing craft may seem simple, perhaps even, and I cringe at the thought of it, commercially entertaining. I assure you however, there's much more beneath its surface.

This story is a Gothenburg Vignette, a side story to a twenty-eight novel series I have written called "The Slayer Chronicles." I am currently searching for a literary agent, and publisher for the set. This vignette "AND THEN..." is just the first of many you'll find. As for my pseudonym "Johnny Darko," it is the name I use for all my paranormal genre writing.

I hope you enjoy my work.

All characters, places, and situations are of course all fictional. The word find is intended to help readers experience a deeper connection to the prose. I had fun making it.



A self-imprisoned mind

Johnny Darko
(Johnny E. Mahaffey)
August 7-19, 2013

ALICE AND DAIN SEEN THE DEAD
OMAGIC MOON OF HOPE PARADISE
BELLIAVOON OF THE HORN OF WIND
LUDONDESEN OF THE ANOPISTIC
AOROOTAPNOMN OF THE IORIPSE
MPOGNTGCDNWRPSCYCHRAPUBTDZ
ERNARDOKLAKROFAIRWAYESAPVELNZ
LEOLOAILLOS ENONONONONONONON
AMITMOTPTOTEDODOTCHAUDDOMPWGE
MAFOGODISTNSXNMLLWAYSPONEOS
EROWNONOFIAMIYPOLYAMOROUSNODOT
OINAOCTOCEITIOALENCHHAMMERDNDP
GTOYGEHORDCENWEEDOOONHONONICK
AADDUZZSRVCKDXOTOGNRTAMPAXRED
RTUOOLCTNISATANOIOPASRYFSNEZE
LLCSTIEEANTLESIEHOMHEOFCLUMP
IYKKNTRGATIEEDONOIYRSFICKY
CONNORCOLLINSPIZZERIALILLYG00