



Pilcrow & Dagger

Spine-Tingling Stories

Featuring
Author P.T. Mayes

Table of Contents

Short Stories – Fiction

Grandfather’s Gift By Nicholas Bridgman Page.....	8
The Crate By Kyle Placet Page.....	15
Skeleton Foxtrot By Gwendolyn Kiste Page.....	23
Sins of the Son By Roger Schumacher Page.....	29
Illusion By Calvin Demmer Page.....	38
re/Collect By Matthew Barker Page.....	43
Day Trip to Rotterdam By Kyle van der Laan Page.....	52



Roger Schumacher - Roger has been an Inventory Analyst for many years. He has been writing on his own and has taken several classes in order to better learn the craft. He has been working with prose for the past decade. This story is among Roger's first publishing attempts.

Sins of the Son

His eyes opened in a strange place. It was cold and dark. He didn't know where he was but felt the weight of his surroundings upon him. There was a light at the far end of the blackness. A long passageway way led out of the darkness. Entering the passage, he felt it strange and yet vaguely familiar. The light source was in the shape of a window. He pressed his hand against the glass, but felt no warmth. Looking out from there, he saw the sun in the sky. He could tell he was standing inside a large house. He looked down and could see there were two floors below him. There was a large green lawn below. A concrete walk led from a circular driveway to

the front of the house. He was alone in the strange house, but he could not explain the sense of déjà vu he felt.

He turned from the window and looked down the opposite end of the passage. There was a door cracked half open at the end. He couldn't shake the nagging feeling inside his mind. He pulled open the door and entered a small library.

There were books on shelves that lined the entire rear wall. Several other bookcases stood on either side of a window which let in a dull light from outside. This room felt warm and pleasant. Feelings of affection came to him as he gazed at the many books. He stepped toward the desk that occupied the

middle of the room. His foot caught on something which littered the floor. He bent over and saw a pile of ash. A closer inspection revealed the remains of burned books; hundreds of them; now nothing but soot and a few remaining pages. A feeling of sadness and loss that wasn't there before suddenly filled him. Rage then exploded from within; it came as swiftly as the sadness had, forcing him to leave the room.

He came to the next door which also was open and looked inside. It was a large bedroom. He stood among the ragged furniture and dirty floor. He parted the thick drapes of a window with one hand and coughed at the dust he stirred. The view from there was of the back of the house. There was a large yard with a small greenhouse at its far end. Its glass panes all but

smashed by time and decay. Turing toward the large bed set against the wall, his eyes saw sheets and blankets strewn on the floor. By the size of the bed, and the night clothes lying about, it looked as though two people had occupied this room. He inspected the vanity opposite the bed and saw accessories belonging to both a man and woman. He nodded to himself, thinking a married couple had occupied this room. Thick dust covered the top of the vanity forever locking the items in a lack luster order. Old



combs next to brushes, jewelry strewn about, an old shaving kit, laid on its surface, waiting.

His attention was drawn back toward the bed. Again he felt the feeling of dread wash over him. He picked up one of the sheets from the floor. His hand felt the material as he tried to figure a reason for his apprehension. Suddenly, a flash occurred in his mind. He saw arms flailing away from under the sheets. There was a darkness holding them down. The vision ended when he dropped the sheet. The sense of rage he'd felt earlier returned. An air of pure terror gnawed at the fringes of his mind as he ran from the room and back into the hallway.

He arrived at the end of the hall and came upon a door. He pulled the door open and saw a staircase descending to the floor below. He looked back over his shoulder and saw only the doors to the rooms he'd entered at the end of the passage. He decided to venture down the stairs. There were cobwebs above him littering the ceiling of the stairwell. He heard the creak of the steps as his feet tread upon them. His hand glided over the hand rail on his right. He felt the chipped and peeling paint from the banister against his palm. He reached the second floor landing. Its window filtered in the putrid light from outside. He gazed through the dirty glass. This side of the house was in complete in shade he saw nothing but unkempt hedges below. He continued down the stairs.

He came upon an old door at the end of the landing. His hand confirmed the heavy oak and disintegrating finish on its surface. He reached for the knob and turned it. The rust of the metal hardware fought against his efforts but the mechanism worked eventually. He pulled open the door and entered into another corridor. This one was differed from the first. There were small chandeliers hanging at regular intervals along the ceiling that provided murky light.

This house has been deserted for some time, he thought. The rugs were covered with dust and dirt. He left footprints in his wake. The wallpaper had peeled away long ago

exposing the plaster walls behind it. There were several paintings that hung along the opposite wall; their frames were covered by dust. His hands worked to clear the grime from the first one in order to see the image beneath. The portrait of an old man stared back at him. His skin was course and his frame wiry. His eyes held malice which put him at ill ease. He looked at the face and felt a pang of recognition but couldn't place him. He looked to the name plate. The sense of rage returned as he read the name.

"Terrance Newby 1917"

He didn't know why, but now he was scared. The face in the painting seemed to come out of a nightmare. Moving to the next frame he repeated his cleaning efforts. A portly woman with a wry smile sat within the frame. Her face held a sadness that touched him. The nameplate below her read,

"Marie Newby 1917"

The second image gave him the same sense of foreboding. His hands worked to clear the last painting in the hallway. A young man's face looked back from the painting. His features were an assimilation of the previous two. This was the child of the two parents he thought. The young man smiled back from amidst the clutter of a library. He wondered if this portrait had been painted in the old library he'd found upstairs. The painted face had the same cruel facial features, like his father. His fingers traced the name plate below his image. The name plate read,

"Roy Newby 1937"

That feeling terror rose from deep within telling him to get out of this house. It drove his senses to a heightened state taking possession of his rationale. He ran down the hall and came upon a grand staircase that led downward to the foyer of the great house. He took two at time as he ran down the steps. The front door of the house was set just past the opposite end of the foyer.

Light in the shape of an octagon filled the staircase from above. He was about half way down when he noticed it. There was a shadow of a shape dangling in the center of the light.

Looking up, his eyes saw the light coming in from outside. The entire octagon roof was structured in glass which was dulled by years of filth. Some of the panes were broken allowing direct sunlight into the area. He also saw the horror that was illuminated by the light.

Hanging by a long rope from the center of the window was a man. He dangled from above by the rope which was tied off to the banister at the top of the staircase. He was young, like the man in the last painting. The man's form twisted toward him, the man's black dead eyes fixed upon him.

In an instant it all became clear. The fear he'd been feeling now came into full bloom. The lapse of memory was gone. He knew the identities of those in the paintings. He ran from the light of the octagon and the shape that lingered within. Crossing the foyer, his mind was engulfed by horror. The door of the great house was just in front of him as his screams filled the air.

Roy's translucent form crossed the foyer and passed through the door without him stopping to open it. The truth crashed down upon Roy as his essence left the house and fell into the darkness of oblivion. Roy's mind shattered with the realization of his plight.

Roy knew everything now. Those paintings were of his family, his parents and himself. This house was theirs, and the library, the place where Roy collected his books. A lifetime of literature he'd gathered from his only passion- reading.

Roy waited until they'd finished drinking. Their vices would make his task easier. He stood in their bedroom late that night closing the curtain covering the only window. Roy had a pillow perched between his two hands. He brought it down forcefully, first on his father's face. He struggled briefly before succumbing to Roy's efforts. He then walked to the other side of the bed and brought the pillow over his mother's face. She struggled under the blankets as he tried to suffocate her. Her arms flailed under his efforts as the sheets and blankets spilled to the

floor as she died. This was Roy's revenge for an upbringing endured under their vindictive hands. But that isn't what drove him to this despicable deed. That recollection now filled his mind!

They were in the library arguing over Roy's life choices. It was like so many other times before. Terrance was condemning his son for not following in his footsteps. These books were nothing but foolishness! Roy watched as Terrance began pulling out books from the far bookcase and tossing them to the floor. He held up a can of kerosene vowing to once and for all fix the problem. He doused the books with the accelerant while he continued to berate his son. Marie screamed, and tried to stop him. But Terrance shoved her to the floor. With his final act of his cruelty, Terrance lit a match and torched Roy's precious volumes.

Roy's screams filled the house as he fell to his knees trying to extinguish the flames. The books burned among Terrance's mocking laughter and insults. No longer would Roy be distracted by scandalous idealism and dreams. Terrance told his son that he would thank him one day for bringing him back into the real world. Terrance left the room in a huff dragging Marie with him. Roy extinguished the flames with his jacket. His efforts were too late to save his precious manuscripts. Tears rolled down Roy's face. He remained on his knees in the silence of library consumed by loss.

Roy was still in the library hours later. He ran his hands through the ashes of his books hatred filling his heart. Roy knew only one response for this outrage!

The guilt of Roy's crimes consumed him afterward. His shame led him to the only conclusion possible. Roy remembered tying off the noose to the banister above and placing it around his neck. He saw himself jump from the banister and felt the eventual tug of the rope, and heard the loud snap of his neck, which took his life. His life's memory was gone with the sound of shattering bone.

Roy rose once again toward the light from the darkness. He was doomed to repeat his endless wondering in the house of his family. A prisoner in purgatory forever bound to the earth. Roy was fated to relive those last moments forever in hell's fire.



Themes for 2016

January – Fantasy, Fairy Tales, Sci-Fi

February/March – Leprechauns and Love/Romance (no erotica please!)

April – April Fools Stories

May/June – New Beginnings

July – Action and Adventure

August/September – Comedy and Humor

October – Urban Legends

November/December – Murder and Crime and Mystery Stories

What's Happening in November United Kingdom Literary Festivals & Conferences

November 15 - 22, 2015 Plymouth
International Book Festival
Plymouth, UK
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/peninsula-arts/book-festival>

November 16 - 26, 2015 London History
Festival
Kensington, London, England
<http://www.londonhistoryfestival.com>

November 20 - 29, 2015 Folkstone Book
Festival
Folkstone, Kent
<http://www.folkstonebookfest.com>

November 28 - 29, 2015 Cambridge Literary
Festival
Cambridge, England
<http://www.cambridgeliteraryfestival.com>

November 28 - 29, 2015 Tarbet Book Festival
Tarbet, Loch Fyne, Scotland
<http://www.tarbetbookfestival.org>

What's Happening in December United Kingdom Literary Festivals & Conferences

December 6, 2015 6th Unpublished Fiction
Writers Open Reading 2015
Wood Green, London, England
<http://www.blackbookevents.co.uk>

† Information gathered from
<http://www.literaryfestivals.co.uk>

Pilcrow & Dagger



The Shorts

Listen to the Podcast
www.pilcrowdagger.com/podcasts

Produced by: Christopher L. Silver