

# EIDOLOTRY DIGITAL #1

HOW THE  
TRUMP STOLE  
AMERICA!



BY  
DR. SUE US

MCMC 1/19/22

# FROM THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT

Hey Psychos! Welcome to the very first issue of Eidolotry Digital. Our goal with Eidolotry is to provide a monthly themed horror experience. Each issue will be focused around a particular theme. We decided to kick this one off with some tales highlighting the ridiculous nature of politics here in the U.S.A. We've got five great stories this month, and a review of a classic 80s slasher. We're glad to have you, and hope to see you again in the near future.

The Masque Of The 19

E.E. King

There Is No Zombie Outbreak

Josh Schlossberg

Pest Control

L.N. Hunter

Trump's Inferno

Gregg Chamberlain

Courage Of Convictions

Christopher Pelton

That Crazy Driller Killer: A Review

Steve Pelton



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## The Masque of the 19

E.E. King

19 had devastated the country. No plague had ever been so enormous, or so unexpected. It crept stealthily through the night. There was nausea, and sudden fever, food lost its flavor, the scents of the world vanished, and the body was wrenched with a violent, empty cough. If seen, the scarlet rash on the toes of the victim, might shut her away from the world for days, or weeks, or for forever, depending upon the whimsy of fate.

The Leader, however, was pugnacious and undaunted and ignorant. When the unchecked infection rate of his people far exceeded other regions, when hundreds of thousands died, he signed a bill to cut health care and called to his chambers one hundred rich, fat, white minions from among his government, and with these he withdrew to the subterranean refuge of one of his shelters.

This was a large and extravagant construction, the conception of the Leader's own gaudy and overdone taste. A large and lofty wall surrounded it. The Leader loved walls with a passion he rarely had for his wives after the first week or so. The seven-day itch, he called it.

This wall had doors of titanium locked with the latest and most advanced super-duper high-security bolt.

The administrators took small slips of paper from their briefcases, not unlike to the size and shape of a fortune cookie. Each had a cypher printed on it. They punched in the lock's code. It took ten of them inputting data at the same time to secure it. Then they ate the paper. It was good. They needed roughage. Besides, they had determined to leave method neither of entrance nor egress to the impulsive urges of depression or of fever.

The shelter was plentifully provisioned. With such protections, the administrators could afford to be impertinent and forget infection. The outside domain could take care of itself. In the interim, it was irrational to grieve, or to look inward.

The Leader had afforded all the equipment of indulgence. There was an indoor putting green, there were fast-food trucks, there were topless dancers,

there musician, or one at least one. Well, actually only Kid Rock. There was Beauty, there was wine, there were underage girls, and a few endangered species caged for the sons of The Leader to slaughter. All these and sanctuaries were underground. Without was the 19.

It was near the end of the sixth or seventh month of his isolation, and while the epidemic erupted most heatedly at home and slowed abroad, that the Leader entertained his hundred minions at a masked ball of the most uncommon splendor.

“I, who have always refused to wear a mask, will now have a masked ball,” he chortled.

It was a spectacular scene, that underground masquerade. Let me tell of the chambers in which it was held. There were in all. In most shelters, such suites are long and straight, so that the view of the entire shelter is barely obstructed. Here the situation was very different, as might have been predictable from the Leader’s love of backstage dressing rooms.

There was a sharp turn every thirty yards or so, and in the center of each corridor was lit by a tall and narrow Gothic window. The corridor and the walls both inside and out was of gold-covered - lead leaf, but the windows were of stained glass.

The westernmost room had vibrant blue windows. The second room had purple. The third, green. The fourth, yellow. The fifth, white. And the sixth, violet.

The seventh was the only place not gold, but rather meticulously veiled in black velvet. And the glass in that room was the color of blood.

The seven rooms were without lamp, lantern, or candle. But in the passageways, there stood across from each window, a metal easel, whose flat top held a tiny fire, that cast its rays through the tinted glass and so illumined the rooms.

This made each face and every shadow seem a flickering, grotesque manifestation. But in seventh, the black velvet room, the effect of the fire through the blood-tinted glass, was gruesome, and created so grisly an aspect, few were bold enough to set foot within its confines. It was in this room,

also, that there stood an enormous ebony clock. Its pendulum swayed to and fro with a leaden, heavy, repetitious knell; and when the hour was struck, there came from the deep chest of the clock, a tone which though rich, clear and exceptionally harmonious, lingered so strangely, that every hour, the musicians, Kid Rock, was forced to stop his performance and listen. And also, the topless dancers ceased their gyrations; and while the bells of the clock hung in the air, the silliest grew still, and the aged breathed slowly and deeply, as if in profound meditation. As soon as the echoes died, before one could even notice the silence, bright laugh permeated the gathering; all grinned at their uneasiness and swore that the next striking of the clock would create no such reaction.

But, despite this, it was a golden celebration. Though The Leader had never lifted a hand, except to test the smoothness of the putting green, or to grab a pussy, his own garish taste had specified the atmosphere. He had no eye for color and effect. He ignored the harmony of simplicity, for the stuffed carcasses of wild beasts and golden ornaments. There was much glare and glitter. There were half-naked women with unnaturally large breasts. There were girls just teetering off the brink of childhood. This party would give them a push. There was much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, and not a little of the repugnant.

There were some who thought The Leader senile, or demented. But his followers believed in him blindly, and deafly and without reason, for such is the way of things.

His people had paid for all the trappings of the seven rooms, the babes and the beasts, the girls and the glitter. Only Kid Rock had volunteered.

\*

The ebony clock, which stands in the hall of black velvet, strikes. For a second, the partiers are motionless and still. But as sound fades into the perfumed air, muted laughter chases the last resonance away. The music swells. Kid Rock is getting a workout. The partiers dance more gleefully than ever, shaded by the shifting firelight flowing through the stained windows. Still, no one ventures into the black velvet room with the blood-colored panes; for they have abandoned science and are deeply superstitious.

\*

The party whirled on until midnight. When again, all are stilled by the ebony clock. Before the last peal had sunk into silence, many became aware of a masked figure, no one had noticed. Now the license of this night and

its celebrants was nearly unlimited. No costume was too garish. No, make-up too black. All the assembled had reached deeply into the pockets of the people for their splendor, with never a thought for anyone but themselves. In a congress of such masked, and exalted celebrants, no ordinary appearance would have provoked such a fuss.

But the figure in question had gone beyond the bounds of even this parties' inappropriate sense of the appropriate. There are harmonies even in the souls of the most inattentive.

Upon seeing the stranger there rose from the whole company a murmur of surprise, and disapproval and revulsion.

For the figure was swathed from head to foot in a shroud. The mask which concealed the face was painted like a skeleton, with bones so detailed even the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in recognizing the façade.

Even this might have been tolerated by the heartless assembly. But the masked woman, for the figure was small and slight, had gone so far as to assume the look of those felled by 19. Her shirt was splattered with blood. And her bare toes had been decorated with a red rash, so excellent in detail it made every guest rub their toes uncomfortably against the sides of their velvet slippers.

When the eyes of Leader fell upon this unearthly image (which with a measured and grave step, as if more fully to maintain its character, stalked to and fro among the dancers, pausing only to cough), his orange forehead reddened.

“Who dares?” he demanded nasally of the administrators who stood nearest — “who dares mock me with this offensive sarcasm? Seize her and don't be gentle. Unmask her — that I see who I am locking up!”

The leader was in the blue room as he spoke these words. But they sounded through the seven chambers loudly and clearly — for the Leader had a microphone that he carried always with him, and the music quieted at the sound of his baying.

“Lock her up!” the partiers echoed enthusiastically, lurching toward the intruder. Several pulled out guns, even though the shelter was crowded with

security.

The security stood against the walls in between folds in the drapery. They avoided the sparkling stained light pouring through each window. Such large men, it was amazing how unobtrusive they were, appearing like dark statues against a gold wall. Like pillars of men.

But though guns had been drawn, no one fired, they remained motionless, frozen, ice sculptures trapped in the moment of drawing a gun. They were so still, because their Leader was approaching the stranger. It was so unlike him, to approach or even to be aware of danger.

No one had tried to detain her. Unimpeded, she passed within a yard of the Leader's person; and, while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centers of the rooms to the walls, she made her way through the blue chamber to the purple — through the purple to the green — through the green to the orange, through orange to the white, and to the violet, a decided movement had been made to arrest her.

Then the leader, fuming with rage lumbered after her as quickly as his corpulent, ancient body could shuffle. None followed him, a deadly terror detained them all.

He approached, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having reached the end of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly and confronted her pursuer. There was a sharp cry, the Leader toppled to the floor in death.

Then, summoning the wild courage of despair, the crowd threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the masked visitor whose small, erect figure stood motionless within the shade of the ebony clock, gasped in terror and revulsion at finding the shroud and corpse-like mask empty of any tangible being.

“Darkness and Decay and the 19-hold illimitable dominion over all,” cried a voice.

Then the emptiness behind the mask spoke.

“Actually, I'm not the 19, I'm much, much older. We still get mistaken



for sisters, though,” the emptiness gave a hollow laugh.

“My roots stretch back to the first humans who crossed the Bering land bridge 13,000 years ago destroying giant ground sloths, woolly mammoths, saber-toothed cats, and all the glorious megafauna that once occupied this planet.

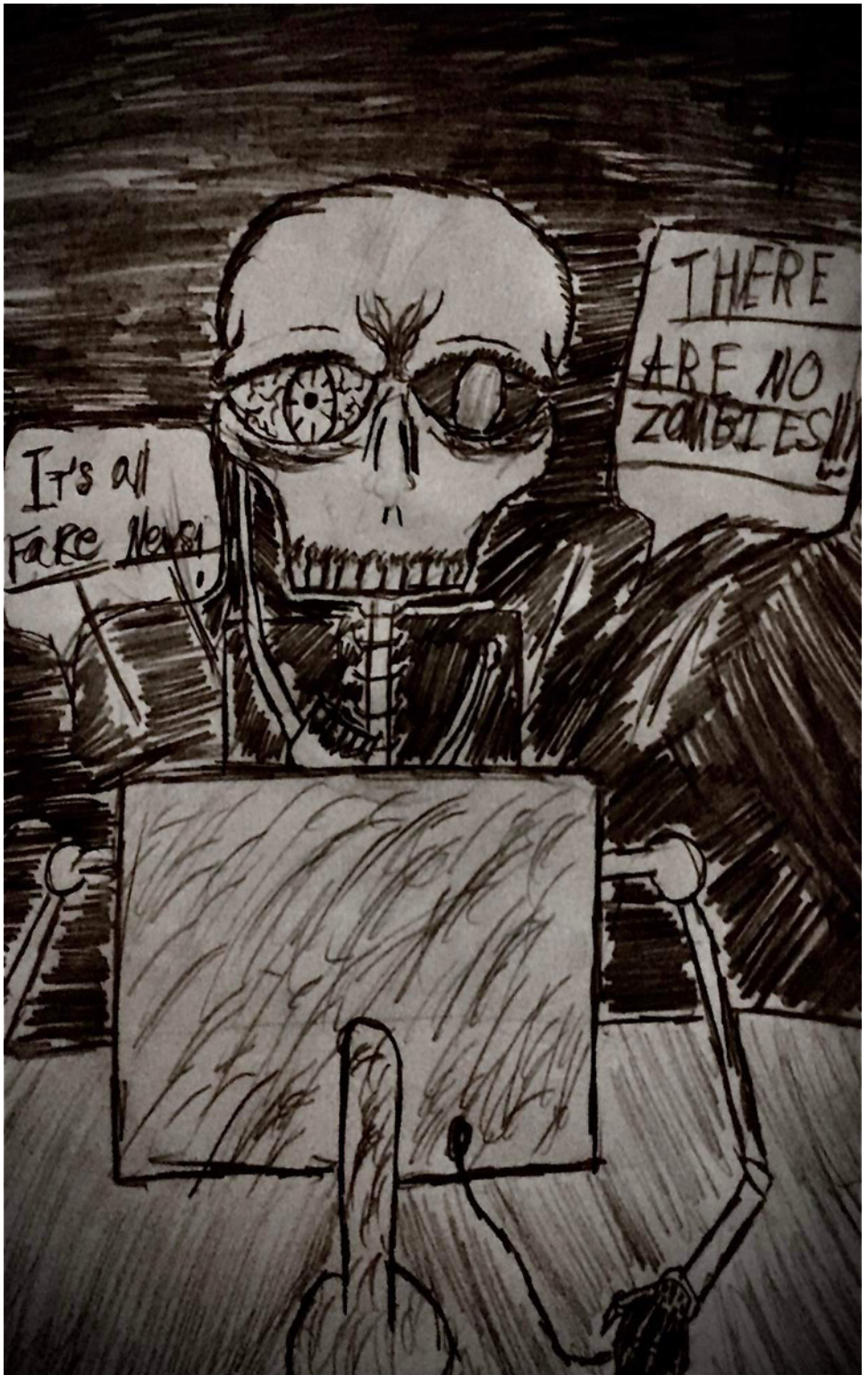
“Even your idea of paradise, your Garden of Eden was born from the destruction of the Middle East’s lush woodland. I can still hear the rustling of trees and the calling of huge river birds over the marshes at twilight.

“The Epic of Gilgamesh, which you proudly claim as your earliest surviving great work of literature tells of the vast cedar wildernesses that carpeted southern Iraq.

The emptiness sighed. “I can still smell the fresh sweetness of their shade. But by 2100 BCE, the Sumerians had turned forest into desert.

“According to The Epic, Gilgamesh defied the gods by cutting down the trees. In return, the gods cursed the land with fire and drought, so perhaps it was a prediction. Humans are not very difficult to predict. Always the same story. And lately you have been speeding up the process.”

It was Environmental Devastation; she had come like a thief in the night when another had been expected. And one by one all the president’s men dropped in the blood and jeweled halls of their shelter and died each in the miserable pose of his collapse. The ebony clock rang once and was silent. And the fires on the easels expired. And Darkness and Decay and Environmental Devastation held illimitable dominion overall.



There Is No Zombie Outbreak!  
Josh Schlossberg

RONNIE BARSTOW started Chatspace group LIBERTY LOVERS AND FREEDOM FIGHTERS

RONNIE BARSTOW added description

A place for American Truthseekers to stop government tyranny during this so-called “zombie” outbreak. Don’t tread on us!

RONNIE BARSTOW added new member BRUCE P. MERRIMACK

RONNIE BARSTOW added new member SANDIE FRANK

RONNIE BARSTOW added new member CRAIG CLEMENTS

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

March 4 at 7:41 PM

With so much bullcrap floating around the lamestream media, it’s time for us non-sheep to spread the Truth, stand our ground, and make sure our country stays free as the day it was founded.

SANDIE FRANK commented

Thanks so much for starting this up, RONNIE BARSTOW. The fear-mongering is out of control.

CRAIG CLEMENTS commented

ITS ALL THEATER!! ONE OF THE LAST STEPS IN THE GLOBALIST PLOT!!

SANDIE FRANK added new members PATTY RUSSO, MITCHELL STANISLAUS, SAMANTHA PRITCHARD

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

March 7 at 8:26 PM

So now the authoritarian politicians and lying journalists have switched out “zombie”—as if anyone over ten years old was buying that—for “Acute Neurological Wasting Disease” or ANWD. Let me ask you guys, do you

know a SINGLE PERSON who's turned? Didn't think so!

CRAIG CLEMENTS commented

CRISIS ACTERS BOUGHT AND PAID FOR BY THE ELITE!! PENTAGON RAN EXERCISE IN JANUARY ON EXACTLY THIS!! THEIR SEEING HOW MUCH THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH BEFORE THEY IMPRISON ALL IN CAMPS!!

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

Right on, CRAIG CLEMENTS! Glad you're on our side.

RONNIE BARSTOW added new member MARINA SCHULTZ

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

March 9 at 6:22 AM

Check out this article from Datadump proving zombies are just a bunch of meth heads let out of rehabs and looney bins. Share the Truth, my friends, share it far and wide!

Datadump.com

Documents Debunk "Zombie" Narrative

-by Shelley Marcuson

Datadump has secured several classified documents proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that the "zombie" propaganda being foisted upon an unsuspecting and gullible public is nothing but...

CRAIG CLEMENTS commented

TOLD YA!!

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

Yet not a peep about it on network news...

SANDIE FRANK added new members MARILYN AMBROSE, TYLER GLICK, WINONA PACKARD-LEURS, BARBARA DANBURY

SANDIE FRANK shared a post

March 10 at 7:04 PM

One of the methies went after a gym class at my kids' school, and now they're shutting down the whole district. What am I supposed to do, quit

my job and stay home all day? Lord, give me the strength.

CRAIG CLEMENTS commented

ALL GOING ACCORD TO PLAN!!

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

Sorry to hear that, SANDIE FRANK. Anything we can do to help?

SANDIE FRANK commented

Know any babysitters?

WINONA PACKARD-LEURS commented

Me me me me!

MARINA SCHULTZ commented

That's why I'm running for school board. I hope I can count on your votes.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

March 13 at 8:19 PM

So for two whole weeks we're supposed to stay home to "slow the spread?"

The best way to slow the spread—of fear—is to turn off your damn TV!

Anyone else's spouse getting sucked into this? Colleen won't even talk to me about it anymore.

SANDIE FRANK commented

Like ALL businesses aren't "essential"!

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

Texas is nowhere as strict as up here. Leon Rust is refusing to shut down his factories and is even firing any employees who don't show up to work!

CRAIG CLEMENTS commented

RUST = 1 OF THE LAST TRUE AMERICAN HEROES!!

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

We need to have a protest or something.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

How about Sunday noon in front of City Hall?

SANDIE FRANK commented

Heck yeah!

CRAIG CLEMENTS commented

100%!!

SAMANTHA PRITCHARD commented

I'll come down on my lunch hour.

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

AWESOME! Let's shut this shit down! Bring signs!

MITCHELL STANISLAUS

I'll be the one waving Old Glory!

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

March 14 at 5:57 PM

Even though it was just me and BRUCE P. MERRIMACK today, I think we woke up some sheeple. Didn't see any media—or zombies lol—but I'm pretty sure the politicians knew we were there. Let's keep building that momentum!

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

At the very least it was good to catch up in person, RONNIE BARSTOW. Because that's the very thing they don't want us doing.

CRAIG CLEMENTS commented

SORRY I FORGOT!!

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK shared a post

March 17 at 2:12 PM

I'm sure you've heard our illustrious "Public Health" director telling us bullets won't work against the Zs—which they're now calling "people experiencing vital-impairment"—so there's no reason for us to buy guns. Which of course means we should all do the opposite.

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

Just got back from three different box stores and they were all sold out. Gun stores shut up tight, too. Gonna try the pawn shop.

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

Got an old shotgun and three boxes of shells because that's all the old guy

would sell me. Best head down there quick if you want to stock up.

SANDIE FRANK shared a post

March 18 at 9:11 AM

Got turned away from the grocery store today because I refused to put on any stupid body armor! Not only won't that nonsense protect you from the methies, you're actually MORE LIKELY to get bit since you can't run away! Pretty sure this is all about bankrupting small businesses by making everyone buy online. Heck, my church is the only place in town still open that's NOT a big box store.

PATTY RUSSO commented

Of course our church is still open because God don't take no sick days. Not only aren't we requiring body armor at services—it's so divisive!—we're not letting anyone in wearing those dang straitjackets.

CRAIG CLEMENTS commented

THEIR TRYING TO TURN US INTO ROBOTS!! BREACH OF THE CONSTITUTION!! WE WILL NOT COMPLY!!

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

It's obviously about the guns, people.

MARINA SCHULTZ commented

No, it's to indoctrinate the children. Which is why I'm running for school board. Can I count on your votes?

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

Sadly, I'm afraid the answer is "e," all of the above.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

March 22 at 4:39 PM

Anyone heard from CRAIG CLEMENTS lately? Messaged me last night that he got into a tussle with some meth head outside the bar—I won't say which one because Chatspace will probably try to get it shut down—and he hasn't gotten back to me since.

SANDIE FRANK commented

Nope, sorry.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

Chatspace won't bother ratting out some bar for staying open, but they will censor messages. Only a matter of time before it happened to us.

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

Stopped by CRAIG CLEMENTS place. Lights were on, and I could hear him banging around inside, but he wouldn't come to the door.

SANDIE FRANK commented

CRAIG CLEMENTS is a big boy, I'm sure he's fine. The good Lord's watching over us all.

PATTY RUSSO

He sure is, SANDIE FRANK. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." PSALMS 23:4

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

SANDIE FRANK Of course CRAIG CLEMENTS is fine. Never said he wasn't.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

March 24 at 3:04 PM

Check it out. Finally, a politician not afraid to stand up for the American people.

Currentscoop.com

Gov. Pulaski Bans "Hitlerian" ANWD Public Health Measures

-by Matt Selway

Governor Pulaski passed an executive order on Monday making it illegal for both state agencies and private businesses to require body armor to protect against attacks from people experiencing vital-impairment, despite some of the highest case counts...

SANDIE FRANK commented

Tears of joy. God bless this man and his courage.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

Sorry to break it to you, but Pulaski knows his order is unenforceable and will be overturned by the courts. He's just gearing up for a presidential run. Nothing but empty virtue signaling.



MARINA SCHULTZ commented

I won't be virtue signaling when I'm elected to the school board. I've got all your votes, right?

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK shared a post

March 28 at 3:13 PM

Good to see the mainstream media reporting on our esteemed "Public Health" director backtracking on the whole bullets-can't-kill-the-Zs propaganda. The old snake finally admitted it was all about making sure law enforcement had enough ammo.

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

This is HUUUUUUGE! Now American citizens know for a fact that their government has been lying through its teeth!

If this news won't get Colleen back from her mother's, I don't know what will.

RONNIE BARSTOW added new member MARCUS JONES

MARCUS JONES shared a post

March 29 at 10:38 PM

You fucking IDIOTS! After almost a million dead, carnage in every town and all over the media, you're honestly still telling yourselves ANWD is a HOAX? Open your fucking eyes, imbeciles! Zombies have taken over the streets! Hospitals are overrun with dead! They're packing corpses into freezer trucks! WHAT PLANET ARE YOU LIVING ON THAT YOU THINK ALL THIS IS MAKE BELIEVE? If you're not going to help, then PLEASE stay home so when you turn you don't take out your whole neighborhood with you.

RONNIE BARSTOW removed MARCUS JONES from the group

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

March 30 at 7:48 AM

Sorry about that wingnut, guys. Thought he was one of us, but he was just another ANWD cuck spreading fear porn. I've deleted his lies and banned him permanently from the group. I promise to be more careful about letting in new members. And to be on the safe side, I'm getting rid of anyone I don't know personally.

RONNIE BARSTOW removed MARILYN AMBROSE, TYLER GLICK, WINONA PACKARD-LEURS, BARBARA DANBURY PATTY RUSSO, MITCHELL STANISLAUS, SAMANTHA PRITCHARD from the group

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

April 2 at 6:57 PM

Linking to an article showing how hospitals are blaming ANWD for almost every death, including strokes, gunshots, and car wrecks!

USAPundit.net

Hospitals Get Federal Funding for Claiming ANWD Deaths

-by Thomas Harrington II

Whistleblowers at medical facilities around the country have exposed the widespread practice of hospitals attributing deaths from accidents and natural causes to...

SANDIE FRANK commented

Every morning and night I get down on my knees and pray that these people will burn in hell for what they've done.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

April 6 at 8:11 PM

A bit of a bummer to report, guys. Stopped by CRAIG CLEMENTS place again, and the mail was all piled up out front. Bad smell from inside. He forgot to lock his garage, so I snuck in. Poor guy was wandering around in daze, moaning in pain, face covered in sores. Yep, I hate to admit it, but looks like our old pal got his dumb ass hooked on the meth. Wouldn't even talk to me about it, just chased me out. Left him a couple can of beans in case he gets hungry. I'll let him detox a bit and check up on him in a few days.

SANDIE FRANK shared a post

April 11 at 1:44 PM

And right on cue, they're trying to push some new "vaccine" made from aborted fetuses that changes your DNA. I'll die before I put any of that poison into my body or any of my family.

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

People have bought into the narrative so deep they've lost their minds. Father-in-law pulled a fucking gun on me when I tried to see Colleen this morning, screaming that I was "infected" and he'd blow my head off if I didn't go! This is what mass psychosis looks like, people. And it keeps getting worse every day.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented  
Guess who's funding the vaccine?

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post  
April 17 at 5:51 PM

Sorry haven't posted in a while. Been trying to make sense of everything. And here's what I got. Even if zombies were real—they're not!—just because SOME people get bit doesn't mean the rest of us can't go on living our lives, amiright?

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK

No matter what the P.C. police say, if you check the stats, the only ones getting bit are the elderly, the chronically ill, and the overweight. Sorry, but if you're not healthy enough to get away from some brainless waddling meth head, you're probably about to die anyway.

SANDIE FRANK shared a post  
April 14 at 3:14 PM

Know why they're pushing the "vaccine" so much? Because the actual cure is super cheap and available to everyone.

I'm linking to the latest Moe Hogan podcast where he interview two biologists talking about a study showing 100% protection from ANWD after taking bisacodyl, which you can find at any pet store. People are getting banned from Chatspace for even talking about this stuff, which is how you know it's the real deal.

MoeHogan.com

Episode #1529: The ANWD Cure Big Pharma Doesn't Want You To Know About

Moe welcomes biologists Chet Rhine and Helena Beyer to blow the doors off the mainstream vaccine narrative by sharing a new study out of...

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented  
And here's the study.

Viralload.org

Effects of a Single Oral Dose of Bisacodyl Canine Laxative Suppositories on Clinical Outcomes in ANWD Infected Subjects: A Pilot Clinical Trial in Kazakhstan

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

There's still plenty of the suppositories left at the pet store. They taste like crap but get the job done. Picked up a bunch for myself and left a few doses outside CRAIG CLEMENTS house. Asshole's still ignoring me, but I can hear him banging around inside, so sounds like he's doing okay.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

April 17 at 10:42 AM

Anyone heard from SANDIE FRANK lately? She's not responding to messages or texts.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

Nope.

RONNIE BARSTOW added new member KRYSTAL WAGNER

KRYSTAL WAGNER shared a post

April 19 at 11:19 AM

Thanks for letting me into the group! I heard about what you folx were doing and had to join! Wanna be up front that I probably don't share your politics on most things, but I'm 100% with you on the vaccine.

Three words for how to stay healthy while this thing runs its course: Raw. Carrot. Juice. My whole family's been drinking nothing but for the last seven weeks, and we're all still healthy as horses (just make sure it's organic)!

RONNIE BARSTOW commented

Worth a try, I guess.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

No fan of veggies, over here. But to each his own.

KRYSTAL WAGNER commented

To each \*their own

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK shared a post

April 28 at 9:13 AM

Even the mainstream media is catching on that this all probably started from a lab leak at the Bayonne Center for Virology in the south of France. But of course they won't let us talk about it because it's "xenophobic."

Washington-Tribune.com

Did ANWD Come From a Lab?

-by Olivia Bellingham

Two weeks ago, 18 scientists wrote a letter to the journal Biology calling for a new investigation and describing both the animal-to-human theory and the lab-leak theory as "viable." The idea is made plausible...

KRYSTAL WAGNER commented

C'mon folx, this was no lab leak, it spread from eating escargot.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

April 28 at 10:33 AM

Sure enough, the tyrants at Chatspace took down the Tribune article about the lab leak and gave us a "community strike," whatever that means.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

Boy, that was fast.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

May 3 at 5:18 AM

Taking a trip up to my buddy Chuck's cabin in Montana for a week or so, one of the last places in the country that hasn't turned into a government-run nanny state. There's even a big biker rally next week that sounds like a hell of a lot of fun. Internet's crap up there, but I should be able to check in on my phone.

If someone wouldn't mind leaving some food out for CRAIG CLEMENTS, I'd appreciate it. I don't think he's been eating much, but he's still moving around in there, so hopefully he's on the road to recovery.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

Want some company, RONNIE BARSTOW? I can't say I'd mind some time away from the city, myself.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented

RONNIE BARSTOW, I could drive us both up if you want. Got an extra fly rod, too, if you wanna do some fishing.  
BRUCE P. MERRIMACK commented  
You already leave, RONNIE BARSTOW?

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post  
May 12 at 6:10 PM

Hey fellow Freedom Fighters! Long time no chat! Been out deer hunting, horseback riding, and trout fishing with Hank. It's like frickin summer camp! I'm on a library computer right now—yep, everything's still open up here—so I could check in.  
Colleen isn't returning my phone calls, so maybe one of you BRUCE P. MERRIMACK, SANDIE FRANK, KRYSTAL WAGNER, MARINA SCHULTZ could leave a note at my in-laws (I'll DM you all the address) letting her know I'm okay and thinking about her?

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post  
May 25 at 3:44 PM

The meth heads have finally made their way up here, some of them from that biker rally, based on all the leather. But instead of pissing their pants like the rest of the world, the locals up here are just learning to live with it. Might stay another week or so just for the heck of it.

BRUCE P. MERRIMACK, SANDIE FRANK, KRYSTAL WAGNER, MARINA SCHULTZ Anyone drop off that note to Colleen yet?

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post  
June 4 at 1:27 PM

Running a bit low on supplies since the bikers looted the supermarkets. How are things back in the city? Library's closed now too, so I'm sending this from my phone. Can someone let me know if my posts are getting through?

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post  
June 6 at 9:11 AM

Hank went out fishing yesterday and still hasn't come back. Gonna go look for him. And BRUCE P. MERRIMACK or anyone else, if you've got food—cans and dry goods, especially—I can get you directions to the cabin.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

June 6 at 8:47 PM

Found Hank wandering around in the woods. Looks like the idiot ran into some bikers because he was all hopped up on the meth. Dumbass was so high, he didn't even recognize me and started a fight. Even bit my fucking arm when I shoved him off. Not a bad wound, I cleaned it up just fine with some iodine.

I know it's Hank's cabin and all, but I'm not letting that asshole back inside until he stops taking that junk and cleans the fuck up.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

June 7 at 4:12 AM

Looks like I got me a little case of the flu, fever, chills, muscle aches, and all that fun stuff. But to be on the safe side I chewed up a couple of the suppositories. Man, they taste like ass!

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

June 7 at 5:49 PM

Goddamn I feel like shit. Keep puking up the suppositories. But don't worry, I just need to get some shut eye and I'll up bright eyed and bushy tailed come tomorrow.

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

June 7 at 9:08 PM

cant sleep worst headache ever had feels like somene prying open skull with hndred chisels cant walk keep pising myself but dont even care love you colleen loveyousomuch

RONNIE BARSTOW shared a post

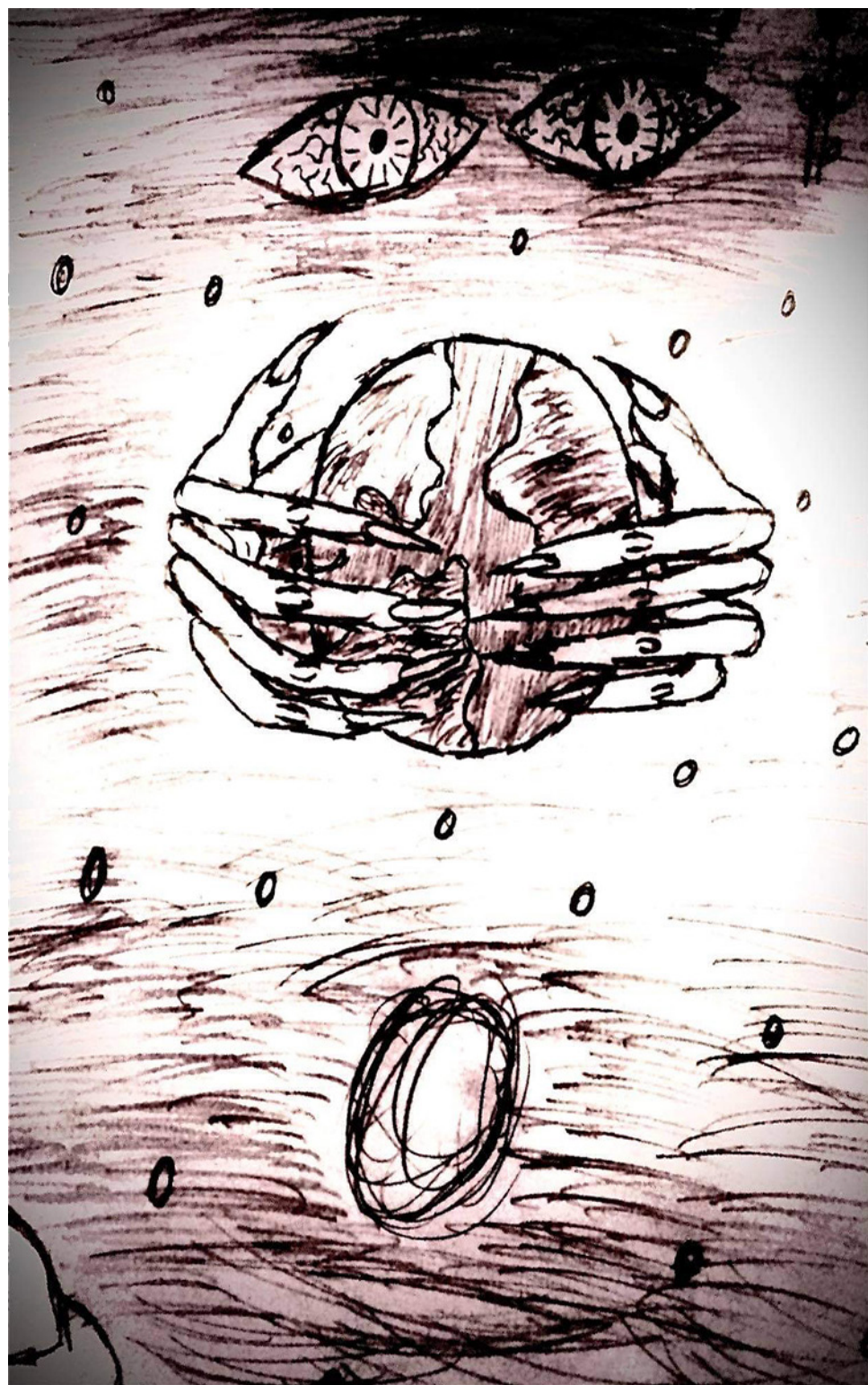
June 8 at 1:32 AM

hunbgryhmgryhugryhiungryungry

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## Pest Control

### L.N. Hunter

God waved a hand at the slowly spinning globe on her desk and sighed. “Look at this mess. This place used to be so nice: rolling green hills, clear blue water, and those fluffy white whatchamacallems—clouds. Now, the ocean’s full of pollution, the sky’s full of smog, and animals are dying everywhere. How am I going to show my face at the next Creators Ball? Odin’s world is a glittery ice crystal, like an oversized disco ball. Sure, it’s tacky, but it appeals to the crowds. And Zeus has olives and wine and dates all over his planet. Why don’t I have olives and dates everywhere? And wine. If only I’d thought of that first—now, it’ll look like I’m copying him. Was intelligence a mistake?”

Armitage, God’s personal assistant, set a tray with tea and biscuits on the desk and said, “Weeelll, Your Highness, I did warn you about the humans...”

“Come now, they were cute little critters to begin with.” God looked up at Armitage and laughed. “Don’t you remember when they discovered fire—that was a hoot.”

Armitage grimaced. “Though, who could’ve guessed what that would lead to?”

God continued, “Still, there’d be no Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? without them, and all those baking shows.”

Armitage harrumphed.

Squinting at the globe, God murmured, “No, it’s no good. I’m going to have to get rid of them.”

“Not the ten plagues again,” Armitage said drily, as he handed God a cup of tea.

“Ta.” God took a sip. “No, not the Me-damned plagues, thank you very much. Bloody stupid idea. I don’t know what got into me.”

“Two ounces of Acapulco Gold and an amphora of cheap Rioja, if I

recall correctly.”

God smiled. “I do like wine. Best thing that son o’ mine ever did, changing water into booze. He never did get the hang of olives and dates, though. Anyway, every failure is an opportunity to learn, as all the management gurus say. One thing the plagues taught me is start simple and keep upping the ante until the buggers die or leave.”

“So, what’s first?”

God stroked her luxurious white beard. “What do you say to some nasty weather? I’ll just turn up the thermostat a tad. We’ll have floods, ice storms, and droughts in no time. Crop failures and forest fires, to boot. Throw in a financial crisis too, so that they can’t afford to fix anything.”

\*

God blinked, and several years passed.

\*

Armitage pursed his lips as he eyeballed the globe. “Well, Your Godliness, that didn’t work very well, did it?”

“Sneaky little bastards, aren’t they? Especially the rich ones—how in My name did they manage to make money out of the bank crashes? And have you seen what they’re doing now? The climate has got them so worried they’re thinking of jumping into rockets and becoming someone else’s problem.” God laughed. “Wouldn’t it be funny if they landed on Odin’s place? He’s a stickler for cleanliness, so imagine what a bunch of messy humans would do to him.”

Armitage muttered, “Interstellar travel is a bit beyond them. You can’t rely on the humans sorting things out for themselves.”

“What about going small—a vicious little virus?”

\*

A mere couple of years elapsed in the blink of God’s eye this time.

\*

“Me-damnit! They’re not as gormless as they look. The virus is just about under control. Not as much as they think, but still, it seems to have run its course. Oh, I can throw in a few more mutations, but who knows how well that’ll work?”

Armitage peered at the globe. “And look! The rich ones are even richer. How do they do that?”

“Money is the root of all... something. Anyway, it doesn’t matter. What does matter is that there are even more of the little buggers than when we started. Worse than rabbits.” God dabbed at her eyes with the sleeves of her robe and wailed, “What am I going to do?”

“How does another war sound?”

God sniffed. She moved her jaw from side to side, as if chewing on the idea. “Who’ll we get to start it?”

“What about that chubby little man with the bad hair?”

“Which one do you mean? They all look the same. Johnson? No, Trump?”

“Oh, You in Heaven, no! They chucked him out ages ago. I mean the Korean guy, one of the Kims.”

God’s brow furrowed. “Kardashian? Does she have a country now?”

Pacing up and down, Armitage said, “No, North Korea’s too small. Might make a bit of a mess, annoy a few people. But he’s not big enough to get a decent war going. Middle East, perhaps. They’re rather volatile at the moment. Have been for quite a while, truth be told.”

God, wanting to demonstrate she’d read the whole newspaper and not just the Sunday supplement, asked, “What about China?”

“Now there’s an idea,” agreed Armitage. “Then again, they’re a bit too globally integrated. We need someone paranoid who has lots of nukes.”

“I thought you said we’d got rid of Trump.”

“A real war, not a Twitter squabble.”

“What about that bear wrestler?” God said eagerly. “Whatshisname—Pouty or Pooty or something?”

Armitage nodded. “Ah, yes, Russia. That ought to work. And the country’s oligarchs have plenty of money to fund the operation.”

“Oligarch’—isn’t that a great word? Oll-eee-gark. Makes your kips dance.” God said. “I wish I’d come across it right back at the start. It’d be a better name for a rhinoceros than, well, ‘rhinoceros.’ That’s a stupid name for an animal. Nobody can spell it properly, so they shorten it. Tell me anyone who knows what the plural is? And the things always look grumpy and miserable. Just think how majestic they’d be if they were called oligarchs?” She lay back in her chair and put on her best David Attenborough: “Here we see the gentle but majestic oligarchs roaming the Alaskan deserts.”

Armitage frowned. “But rhinos—rhinocerotes, I should say—don’t live in—”

“Rhinocerotes? That can’t possibly be right.”

“That’s not important,” Armitage said. “We should be focussing on this war.”

God leaned forward. “Are you sure about this? War’s awfully messy.”

“But isn’t that the point, Your Omnipotence? Get rid of those pesky humans once and for all.”

“What about collateral damage to all the other animals? Those cute-sy-wootsie red pandas and meerkats, with their cuddly widdle faces.”

“Look, your High-and-Mightiness,”—Armitage pressed his hands on the desk—“it’s either war or another meteor strike, and that one time was a bit of a disaster.”

“Hmm. Meteor strike. I’d forgotten about that one. It did a good job of clearing out those uppity dinosaurs. We’d have been in a lot of trouble if I’d let them complete their fusion hyper-drive! And the impact was very pretty—even Odin said so.”

“With all due respect, Ma’am, while the meteor did indeed remove the prospect of a universe populated by space dinosaurs, it took millennia for your planet to recover from the damage. Far more time than any war has

ever required.”

God stroked her beard. “I suppose. Patience has never been my strong point. Well, let’s give war a chance. If that doesn’t work, we can always throw an asteroid at them. Now, if you’ll excuse me, Celebrity Bake-Off is about to start. I want to see if Selina’s angel slices beat Marcel’s devil’s food cake.”

END



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# Trump's Inferno or, The Greatest Plea Bargain of Them All

## Gregg Chamberlain

“Guilty as Hell!” declared Minos.

The Chief Judge of Hell allowed himself a momentary grim chuckle at the obvious pun. But his eternally damned heart just wasn't really into it. That joke hadn't even been very funny the first time that he'd said it an aeon ago. Countless repetitions century after century after bloody damn century had long since leached what little humour it had ever contained.

Leached? Minos thought. Or leeches? Thick eyebrows rubbed together as he frowned and pondered, then shrugged. Either description was accurate as far as he cared.

Punning had become automatic whenever the Chief Judge of Hell sat to review the state of a soul's damnation. Almost an obligatory added punishment—he grimaced at the accidental, if it was accidental, mental quip—for every damned soul he dealt with during the course of his eternal infernal duty. An additional penalty as part of the final sentencing to whatever Circle of Hell a soul was bound.

Speaking of which, Minos reminded himself. He returned his attention to the shivering, quivering soul down below at the foot of his black basalt judgment seat. A small smile appeared and disappeared from his face.

The forked tip at the scaly end of a long, thin tail slid out from behind the sin-black stone judgment seat. It undulated over the pitted frozen lava floor, the fine hairs along its main length whispering as they brushed over crack and crevice in passing around to the front of the throne-like chair.

The tail slithered up one of Minos' hairy legs. Once, twice, six times the serpentine tail encircled his gross torso. Another small smile slipped across and vanished from the sneering face of the Chief Judge

of Hell.

“Well, oh Saviour of the Universe, it’s been fun,” mocked Minos, “but it’s time for you to go preach your sermons to yourself, Reverend. Enjoy your new accommodations!”

With a whispering hiss of scale and fur, Minos’ tail swiftly slid down from around his body. It whipped through the foetid air of Hell’s Court of Judgment and wrapped around the shrieking soul. The tail rose up and up, its immeasurable length extending out into the infernal atmosphere and then plunging downwards, carrying the still-screaming soul towards its allotted place of torment in one of the burning tombs for heretics, false prophets, and televangelists in the Sixth Circle of Hell.

Minos sat back, watching as his infinitely long tail retracted swiftly and slid back into place behind his judgment seat. He sighed a long, deep, eternally damned sigh.

Maybe I need a vacation, he thought. Go spend some time in Limbo with Plato and Sophocles and that lot. Let Rhadamanthus and Aeacus handle things for a while. It’s about time those two pulled more of their share of the weight after having it so soft over in Tartarus.

It’s not like there was any real urgency, he knew. If the court docket piles up, who cares? It’s just another added punishment, and what’s wrong with that? This is Hell, after all. And Hell’s all about punishment, and torment, and abandon all hope, ye who enter here, forever and forever, amen!

No, I know what I really need, Minos mused. “A damned soul that’s really worth calling a damned soul! Not more of these wretched worms with their piss-poor perversions and squalid sins.”

He snorted. “Where are the Hitlers and the Stalins? The Pol Pots and the Torquemadas?” Minos scoffed. How he would love to see “Scarface” Al or Idi Amin appear before him for the first time again.



See them strut their Big Bad Man walk before the judgment seat. Then watch their faces as he sentenced them while explaining where they were going and what was going to happen to them when they got there.

Minos chuckled at the memory, but that finished in a sigh of regret. The last damned soul to show up in the Court of Judgment really worth calling a damned soul was Charles Manson and Rhadamanthus got to rule on his eternal fate.

“And what does Rhad do?” demanded Minos aloud. “Sends Manson straight to the Seventh Circle. Yes, he belonged there, but all he’s getting is the same treatment every mundane murderous maniac gets there. Now if I had had ol’ Charlie in front of me for sentencing, he thought, I’d have added some neat little twist, besides the usual boiling blood river and fire. Some extra torture that would be a worthy tribute to Charles Manson.

Strident sounds of complaint at the entrance to the Court of Judgment interrupted Minos’ pondering. Now what? he scowled.

Looking up, he watched as a pudgy, pouchy figure emerged from the choking sulphurous smoke which obscured the entrance way. Another soul coming for judgment, that much was obvious. But this soul, Minos noted, did not slouch or slink. He strutted.

Then the Chief Judge of Hell saw something that piqued his interest even more about this new arrival to the Court of Judgment. Following behind the strutting soul were the Seven Deadly Sins with a sulphurously scowling Wrath first in line, and Lust close behind with her wanton wiggling walk. Gluttony, Greed and Envy shoved at each other in an effort to claim third place, while nose-in-the-air Pride kept a safe distance between himself and his quarrelling siblings. Sloth trailed along as the last of the official Sins. Stumbling along after Sloth and giggling foolishly was the unofficial Eighth Deadly Sin, Ignorance, with his smarter half-sister, Falsehood, lifting him back to his feet whenever he tripped.

Minos watched this curious parade make its way up across the scorched stone floor of the Judgment Hall towards his throne. Just before the party reached the lower step of the dais, the Sins, including Ignorance and Falsehood, all turned off to their left and marched—well, Ignorance and Sloth made their best efforts at a march—to the little-used jury box placed near the Seat of Judgment where they got themselves sorted and settled after a few frenzied fisticuff moments.

The Chief Judge of Hell turned his full attention now to the soul standing at the foot of the Seat of Judgment. A soul, he was intrigued to see, which was not cowering or cringing, but standing with an air of almost smug self-assurance, as though whoever this soul used to be, he was accustomed to being the Big Boss.

This could be interesting, thought Minos, with any luck.

The foremost judge of the Inferno rested his great scaly arms on the black stone arms of his throne. He stared down at the soul before him. And waited.

The soul stared back up. He brushed a waving tip of an orange forelock away from his eyes. Glared up at the Chief Judge of Hell. Small hands clasped together over the folds of a fat belly drooping over a very small set of genitalia. Knees flexed and straightened, feet shuffled with growing impatience.

Minos waited.

“Well?” the soul demanded in a petulant tone.

A little smile curved one end of the Chief Judge of Hell’s mouth. “Well, what?”

“Well,” whined the soul now. “Let’s get on with this. I’ve got things to do, real important things, better places to be and really important people to see.”

“Really?” replied Minos, dragging the word out slowly. “And what, pray tell, would you like me to do about it?”

A loud, disgusted—and disgusting—snort was the response. “I want you to fix this mess! I don’t belong here! I belong in Heaven with the Big Guy, best place to be for me for now. I know the Pope personally. We’re like this!” The soul held up one hand with index and middle finger crossed together. “So that means me and God are just like that, too. Best of the best of the best, that’s me and Himself.” The hand gestured aside at the jury of Sins. “Just like me and these fine folk, these ones here to testify to my good name and character.”

These are his character references? Eyebrows arched in surprise, Minos glanced over at the assembled Sins, including Ignorance, with his idiot’s grin, who tittered and drooled. Falsehood offered a “what can I say?” shrug.

The soul waited, ethereal arms akimbo on his pudgy translucent hips, glaring up at Minos. Who chuckled low in response.

“Well, I apologize most sincerely in advance if there’s been an error on our part,” he replied. “But let’s just check the record to be sure, shall we?”

An imp appeared beside the Seat of Judgment and placed an obsidian crystal slate on one arm of the throne then vanished. One of Mino’s clawed fingers stabbed down on the slate. The foul air between himself and the impertinent soul rippled and coalesced into a series of rapidly appearing and disappearing images. Most of the images were of the soul as a mortal, at different ages and stages of his former existence. Voices accompanied each succeeding image, pleading, arguing, bargaining, demanding, commanding, begging, shouting, whispering, wheedling, jeering, sneering, leering, insulting, whining, and laughing, laughing, laughing.

A long, slow whistle escaped from between Minos’ tight-pursed

lips as he regarded the images scrolling over the infernal screen. “Well, well, you are just the veritable cornucopia of sin,” he said, giving a brief glance at the soul. He paused the scrolling images several times for more prolonged viewing.

“Mm mm mmmmm.” He looked up again. “You seem to have given most of the Seven a real workout during your mortal span. Them and their cousins.” Minos tapped the slate again and resumed watching.

“Well, Hell!” Minos exclaimed at last, as he tapped the slate to freeze the latest image. He leaned back in the judgment seat and gave the soul a long, slow, up and down look of inspection.

“I would say that rather than you and Himself, uh, Donald, is it?—can I call you Don? —” Minos declared, “right then, Donny, instead of you and the Big Guy, it’s actually been you and Ignorance who have been like this”—he held up his own taloned index and middle fingers crossed—“and it’s pretty obvious that you’ve also been real good friends with Sloth and Gluttony.” He smiled as the suddenly embarrassed soul tried and failed to suck in a very flabby stomach.

“And then there’s Lust,” Minos leered. “Oh, you gave her quite the shakeup, and shakedown. And up. And down. Up again. Down again. Up and down some more, over and over and over again and again and again. Yes, indeed, lots of up and down time between you and Lust.”

“That’s a damned lie! Nothing but fake news!” Donald yelled. “I love women! I love all women! Love and admire and RESPECT them. No one respects women more than me. Biggest respect of all, that’s me, with women!”

Minos didn’t even have to glance over to see Falsehood rolling her eyes to know this was a boldfaced lie of the barest, most naked sort. “Well,” he said, smiling and tapping the obsidian crystal slate, “let’s just see again how respectful you are, shall we?”

His smile broadened at the loud gulping response even as he

leaned over the slate. Eyebrows arched at what the Chief Judge of Hell viewed in a swift succession of images. Very graphic images. He tapped the slate again to cease its projections and leaned back on his throne.

“Well,” grinned Minos, “according to our records, Donny, you behaved like a randy rutting teenager all your life, because if you weren’t doing it, you were sure thinking about it. A lot. And you did do and think about it a lot. Anything and anyone and any age, if you could get away with it.”

Minos paused to examine the last image on the slate. He tapped it. His eyebrows rose again. “Damn, that comment of yours there is just borderline incestuous. And what’s this one about a horse’s face. Oh, I see, well, now.” He tapped pause on the slate again and favoured Donald with a wink.

“You are just a regular love ‘em, leave ‘em, laugh at ‘em, and lie about ‘em kind of guy, aren’t you? I can appreciate that.” Minos watched Donald’s face light up. “But I can’t accept it as an excuse from punishment for the sin of Lust.” His grin widened as he viewed the soul’s fallen face.

Minos tapped the slate once more and watched the images pass by again. “Hmm, Avarice—sorry, Greed—is another bosom buddy of yours, right alongside Falsehood. You did a lot of business doing business with those two for partners. Pride and Envy? Huh!” He tutted at Donald. “You really couldn’t believe that you weren’t the centre of the universe? You actually believe it was always all about you?”

Minos studied the projection of images. “Bit weak with Wrath, maybe just too lazy to really make the effort but, still and all, you were a nasty piece of work, no doubt about that. That pandemic situation, my, my, real pièce de résistance work that—”

“I take no responsibility for—”

“I’m sure you don’t,” interjected Minos, interrupting the damned

Donald's interruption. "Yes, I know you don't. You never did, did you?" He leaned over to wag a claw-tipped finger under the cringing soul's ethereal nose. "Not...even...once!"

The Chief Judge of Hall leaned back again, taloned fingers steepled before him. "So much sin here. I am not sorry to say that you are! exactly! where! you are supposed to be, Donny-boy. The question really is: Where to place you and then what to do with you once you're there?"

Donald's small hands wrung together. "Plea bargain! I want a plea bargain," he exclaimed. "There must be some kind of deal we could make?"

"The only deal-maker in Hell is Satan," replied Minos, "and he only bargains with souls who are still in the mortal realm. You're in Hell now, Donny-boy. No more deals."

Minos leaned back on his throne. "Now then," he mused. "What to do with you?" He glanced at the damned soul, who now quivered in fear. "Where to put you?"

Donald fell to his knees. "Please, let me—"

"Lots of sexual indulgence," murmured Minos, seeming not to listen. "Maybe the Second Circle, with a slight change, just for you. Replace your own equipment with a working set of female parts." He gave Donald a lying grin. "We have a lot of demons always in need of a little 'recreational release' and you could help with that as a sort of combined punishment/community service sentence. Mind you, some of the boys are not exactly 'anatomically correct', but that doesn't bother them. And eternity will just fly by even quicker if they go at you two or three at a time."

"No," moaned Donald. "Nononononononononononono."

"Gluttony, now that's the Third Circle, with an all-you-can-eat-

and-more buffet.” Minos grinned. “Mind you, the food’s all shit. Literally, it’s nothing but shit, shit, and more shit, breakfast, lunch, dinner, and all the snacks in between.” His grin grew wider as he watched Donald fight to keep from gagging and heaving. “Demon shit.” Minos smacked his lips. “Mmm-mm-mmmm! Nice and spicy. Which, so I am told, is an acquired taste. But with all eternity ahead, I imagine you would acquire the taste for it, eventually.”

Two taps of a talon on the slate and the life of Donald vanished, replaced with a view of sinners spinning round and round in the crimson currents of a river of boiling blood.

“The Seventh Circle,” intoned Minos, “for the Angry and Wrathful, and that includes tyrants and anyone else in positions of authority—elected or otherwise—who abuse their power. I would suggest holding your breath.”

Hands clutching the side of his head, Donald watched the images of the damned drown over and over again. “That’s not me! I never did anything bad for my country!” he wailed. “I love America! Loved it the most!”

Minos slowly shook his head. “Sure, Donny, sure, you loved your country a whole lot. When it suited you. Or profited you. Guess you’d rather not waste time looking over the Ninth Circle then. That’s for traitors only. Some folks, like myself, find things are a bit too cool for comfort down there.”

“Cool?” Donald answered, a hopeful look lighting his face.

“It almost passes for air-conditioned by Hell’s standards,” replied Minos casually. “Nothing to do down there but lay around and enjoy the cooling breeze for all of eternity.”

“Right then!” Donald declared, jumping to his feet. “I’m a traitor! Benedict Arnold had nothing on me! Selling out America to the British? Shit, I was in bed with the Russians! Putin and me were always

bum buddies. I am a dyed-in-the-wool true-blue traitor. The greatest traitor of them all!”

“We’ll just agree to disagree on that last point,” chuckled Minos. “But if that’s what you really want, Donny-boy, I suppose it’s all settled then, though I’m sure the boys in the Second Circle will be sorry not to have you around to entertain them.” A genuine smile creased the Chief Judge of Hell’s face. “So it’s down to the Ninth Circle for you then. The celebrity circle, in fact,” he added in a sly tone. “You’ll be hobnobbing with all the Big Name traitors. Brutus, Judas Iscariot, maybe even rubbing shoulders with ol’ Lucifer himself.”

Donald punched the hazy sulphurous air in triumph. “Yes!” he crowed. “That’s how it always is. The best there is, that’s me! I wrote the book on doing the deal!”

He looked up at Minos seated in the judgment seat, a smug smirk of success spreading now across his jowly face. “It’ll be a cold day in Hell before anyone beats me!”

“Truer words were never spoken,” replied a grinning Minos. “You have no idea how right you are.”

Minos’ tail snaked out from behind his throne, swiftly wrapped itself nine times around his body, then whipped out and bound itself around Donald’s still-smirking soul.

“Time to put your case ‘on ice’ now,” declared Minos, as he watched his tail suddenly shoot upwards and then stretch down, down, down to the frozen bottom of Hell.

Minos chuckled with true satisfaction. That joke was actually funny.

He made a mental note to send a message to the frost demons in charge of the Second Ring of the Ninth Circle, with instructions for a few little extra features added to Donald’s punishment, once his damned soul was settled fast onto its frozen couch.



“A dozen or more rimewyrms squirming their way inside and out of Donny-boy’s ass should do for a start,” murmured Minos. “Hell, he could even become the new Ninth Tee in this year’s Snow Golf Championship Tournament.”

The Chief Judge of Hell relaxed on his throne as an almost-forgotten feeling of real contentment washed over him.

“Sometimes,” Minos remarked aloud, “this job isn’t so damned bad.”

He smiled with satisfaction at the deliberate pun.



END

## **The Courage of Convictions**

### **Christopher Pelton**

“It’s like I’ve been telling you for years, folks. The so-called scientists and doctors have been filling your heads with their B.S. Despite the continued reassurance from the President and his administration, the Deep State keeps pushing their phony narrative. They want you to be scared. They want you to spend all your hard-earned money on masks and supposed vaccines. Those far-left Liberals want you to believe that this great country of ours is broken and that they are the only ones who can fix it. Of course, we know better than that, don’t we folks?” A deafening roar came from the crowd. American flags swept through the arena.

Roger Buckstone looked out over a sea of flags, banners, and the green/white hats that were the trademark of the rabid followers of the current administration and, to a certain extent, the fans of his highly rated cable news show, A Stone’s Throw.

“For years the two party system in this country has turned our once great Democracy into the laughing stock of the world. The constant bickering amongst themselves stymied the process that would lead to actually accomplishing anything that could truly help American people just like you. They have moved our country further away from God and the fundamental freedoms that this great and glorious land was founded on. Are you really going to let these socialist kooks take away your rights?”

Again the beast known as Crowd let up a cheer. They began to chant his name. After taking a moment to suck in the adulation of the faithful, Buckstone raised his hand for silence.

“We were on a very dangerous path folks, but then, God looked down on the state of this modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah, and he sent us a savior. He sent us a man, the only man that could restore this country to greatness. A man who would bring respect back to the U.S.A. I know you, the chosen people, know who I’m talking about.”

Even the briefest suggestion of his name was all the crowd needed: and an ear-rattling explosion tore through the arena, blocking out any sound coming from the P.A. system. The base had become so rabid that they would go anywhere and listen to anyone willing to sing the praises of the high and mighty leader. Was the man an idiot? Probably, but more importantly, his followers undeniably were. Standing on stage, he offered his best contrived smile, while his mind was occupied with what really mattered, the massive lines that had formed at the merchandise table. The steadily increasing sales of a wide variety of presidential, promotional, and supported products had made him more money than any contract he had been offered by Tower News. Having been in the business for so long, he learned that the message didn't matter anymore. In the twenty-five years he had been in the cable news game he knew that the message changed. Some days it changed two or three times in a single twenty-four hour cycle. He knew that all of the things he accused the Dems of doing, the other side was just as guilty. If the Democratic party offered him what the Republicans were able to, he would have been singing the praises of the blue brand every night on one of the more liberal news organizations. Anybody who had been paying the slightest bit of attention over the years would know it was near impossible to get anything of significance done in Washington anymore. Politics was a long con game, and he had mastered how to run it a long time ago.

“Ladies and gentlemen, it has been my absolute pleasure to be able to come out and speak with you tonight, but I know why you're really here. My fellow Americans, it gives me tremendous pleasure to be able to introduce to you the 47th President of the United States of America, Kenneth Gregory Walker.”

The band began playing, and the ever-impressive sight of the 6'10" President of the United States strode out onto the stage. A brief embrace was followed by a raising of hands, and with that Buckstone exited stage left.

Once he stepped behind the curtain, he was immediately engulfed by his support staff. They hurried Roger through the throngs of backstage fans, filling him in on the status of the event, the cash take, and his schedule for tomorrow. Roger climbed into the back of the car and signaled to the driver to go.

Erick Sanchez Jr was twenty minutes gone from the rally site, before the echo of utter stupidity finally began to cease in his ears. This was the fifth such rally in the last three weeks, and quite frankly, he had gotten fed up with the rhetoric. To stand in the open and insist that all of the news stories about the virus were bullshit. To insist that the four hundred thousand people who had already died was somehow an inflated number, one manufactured by those grasping at straws, desperate to reignite the dying embers that was all that remained of the old powers. Every night, they smiled when the red light came on, and then lied to anybody who was willing to tune in. They told us that there was nothing wrong, and anybody who told you differently was fake news. It had become a maddening affair. For weeks he watched as people, the kind that would drown if they looked up at the rain, gathered in massive crowds to offer praise to their leader, and to show up the left by displaying their sudden depths of political knowledge. It was the natural progression of the extreme conservative Right that had somehow gained forward momentum during and immediately following the reign of the “Game Show President.”

Erick Sanchez Jr. was twenty six years old when he received his chauffeur’s license and began working for A-1 transportation. His family, the majority of whom were still in Mexico, had been the owners of a Tequila bottling company for more than three generations. When Erick Sr. was accepted into Baylor Medical School, it led to an argument that tore the family apart. Erick Sr. said goodbye to his family and left for America. It would be the last time he would speak to his Father before his death. After graduating and entering his residency, Erick Sr. met an ambitious young woman studying to become a surgeon. Kelly Waters was everything Erick had ever looked for in a woman. The two were married two weeks later and in July of 1999, Erick Jr. came into the world.

He was about two miles from the space he had rented for this occasion when a thudding began coming from the trunk. He must have underestimated the dosage needed to keep the mouth breather knocked out. He wasn’t too worried about it, as he patted the .38 snub-nose revolver next to him on the passenger’s seat. He had come prepared for anything that may arise.

When the idea had first popped into his head, Ted immediately dismissed it. Roger Buckston was never alone. He traveled with a group of security guards and hanger ons. Getting to him was going to be an issue.

That was until the night he happened to meet Erick Sanchez Jr.

Ted pulled off the paved Route 15 and onto an unnumbered dirt road. The site came into view, and as he had requested, only a single light bulb illuminated the entranceway. As was expected, there was one car parked near the door. He pulled into the driveway and parked on the other side of the door. He shut the engine off, popped the trunk, and headed to the back of the car. The muffled sounds coming from the gagged mouth of the asshat in the trunk brought a smile to his face. Ted pointed the barrel of his revolver into the trunk. His captive's eyes were wide with terror.

“So here's how it's going to go. I'm going to pull the gag out of your mouth. If you scream, I will shoot you. If you start spouting any nonsense, I will shoot you. I am going to make you an offer. There is no negotiation. You will pick one of the two options that I present. There will be no further discussion or I will shoot you. Do you understand me?”

The terrified man in the trunk nodded his head furiously. Ted reached in and cut the gag from around his mouth.

“You're a terrible person Roger. Yes, of course, I know who you are and what you do. You serve as a fountain of misinformation. You poison the minds of the simpletons who, for some reason, have chosen to follow you on television and even worse social media. You are a small man with a small mind and a big mouth, and that makes you dangerous. Your most recent crusade has a body count. Because of your reckless endangerment, I have decided that you can not be allowed to continue.”

From the depths of the trunk, Roger's eyes grew wider still, and beads of sweat began to roll down his forehead.

“So here's how things are going to go, Rog. I can shoot you right here in the trunk. I'm sure you'll be missed for a day or two. People like you are surprisingly replaceable. If your followers don't hear from you after a few days, they'll give birth to some conspiracy theory about the Deep State kidnapping you or some such nonsense. Then they'll jump on whatever nonsense the next talking head has to offer. They do this in order to convince themselves that they are safe. Or, and if I were you, I would give pause for at least a moment to ponder this next option, you and I will walk into that room right over there. I have set up a camera with a direct feed to your

social media accounts. We will broadcast live, and all you have to do is sit in a chair. Five minutes of your time is all I'm asking for. I ran some numbers and concluded that your time is worth about two thousand dollars a minute. After the five minutes is up, you can stand up, grab the paper bag on the table, and walk out the door. That's all there is to it. Pretty simple choice if you ask me. What do you think, Rog?"

Roger Buckstone's face had turned a troubling shade of red. Through his heaving breath, he managed to nod his head in agreement.

"Well that's just great, what do you say we get you out of that trunk and into a chair." He reached in to cut the strapping that bound his legs together. "Oh wait, I am so sorry there were just two more minor details that I forgot to mention. The first is that you will be handcuffed to the chair for the duration of the five minutes. Surely you can understand the need for this. I have to ensure that you'll stay put. The second and perhaps even lesser demand is that you will not be alone in the room. I and two others will be present the entire time. One is my cameraperson, and the other is a dear, dear friend of mine. So let's not waste any more time, shall we? Ted slit the plastic strapping and dragged his beet red captive out of the trunk. At gunpoint, the two walked across the gravel parking lot.

Under normal circumstances Ted was not a drinker. Coming from a long line of people with various addiction problems, he had decided that was not the road he wanted to travel. Of course that was before the "Game Show President" had come into power and turned the world upside. Now, everynight around eight p.m. he could be found sitting on a stool at the end of the battered oak bar of the SlapShot Bar and Grille, and it was there that the fortuitous meeting between two men, who had nothing in common, had occurred.

Ted pushed open the door to reveal the room exactly as he had described to his guest. To the left of the room stood a masked man running the camera, to the right, near the door was a folding table upon which was a paper bag. In the middle of the room, there were two chairs.

Ted walked Roger to the chair and pushed him down. He pulled more plastic strapping from his back pocket, and quickly bound Roger's arms and legs to the steel folding chair.

“All nice and cozy, Rog? Breathing okay? It’s nice to see that your face has returned to its standard color. Now before we start rolling on this thing, I want to make sure that you’re all settled in. All set then, let’s get the show on the road. The red light on the camera went live.

“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, I’d like to welcome you to this extraordinary live stream. You all know Roger. Say hi to the folks at home Roger. Just kidding, Roger’s not allowed to speak. Now I understand that Roger has had a whole lot to say on the matter of the Trails virus. So I’ve offered him this opportunity to share with us the courage of his convictions.”

Upon the squeaky hinges filling the room, Roger strained against his binding, desperate to see what was happening behind him.

“Hey there, internet, I’d like to introduce you to a friend of mine. Her name is Carrie. Carrie, this is Roger Buckstone, and he’s an asshole. He’s decided to join us for a little chat.” Carrie waved at Roger.

“So Carrie, it’s been a few days since I’ve seen you. Why don’t you tell me, and the combined social media audience of Roger Buckstone, what you’ve been up to lately.” The young woman took the seat across from the increasingly terrified captive.”

“Thanks for asking Ted. For the most part, it was a typical week for me. Work, school, hitting the gym. Oh, and I tested positive for the Trails virus.”

“Wow, that’s terrible news, Carrie, what did the doctors have to say about that?”

“Well, Ted, according to the doctors, you know people with actual medical knowledge, I am right in the juicy part of the disease. According to my test results, people who come into contact with me have a ninety percent chance of contracting the disease. I’m probably going to be dead in the next two weeks.”

Roger Buckstone’s face broke out in a sweat. The camera zoomed in to catch his shifty little eyes dart back and forth in abject terror.



“Now, according to good old Roger here, there is no such thing as the Trails virus. He has made multiple claims in this regard, despite possessing any medical knowledge or even opinions from competent doctors. However, he signs off from his show every night, reminding his viewers that he is one hundred percent confident in his beliefs. That being the case, he should have nothing to worry about. What you are about to see is a man who believes in what he shares with you, his faithful, braindead followers. This is a man who for years has assured you that he holds the answer to solve what people like you believe is wrong with this country. He has profited off your ignorance for years and, in just five minutes, he can walk out the door with ten thousand dollars and complete validation. If, for some reason, he can't beat the clock, he will still be allowed to walk out the door, empty-handed and a long way from home. Are you ready, America!”

Ted walked to the corner and pressed the start button on the clock. The countdown has begun.

Despite being born in America, Erick was no stranger to abuse and bigotry. As the extreme far right pushed their hate filled agenda, even natural born citizens weren't safe from the escalation of violent acts. He was relieved when A-1 had offered him the position. It had been over a year since he had been steadily employed. That night in the SlapShot, Erick had explained to Ted that, much to his disgust, he had been assigned the job to serve as the personal driver for Roger Buckstone for the three weeks that he was shilling in Northeast. He told this stranger how his mother had been infected with Trails during a brief hospital stay for a broken ankle. He told him how she had only been home for two weeks before the symptoms began to ravage her system. How he watched her die, covered in her own filth and raving like a lunatic. Erick told this man how later it was discovered that one of the nurses on duty at the time had forged the results of a viral screening to avoid getting vaccinated. Tim was not surprised in the slightest when it turned out the nurse was a fan of “A Stone's Throw” One week later, the two men, now bonded in a common hatred, met once again at the Slapshot, and this time a large envelope full of cash was handed over. Ted now had the access he needed.

5:00

Carrie rose from her chair and began to wander the space around her. She stopped five feet in front of Roger, inhaled deeply, and began to hack

steadily, spitting up a mouthful of phlegm on the floor at his feet.

4:12

“So how are you feeling, Roger? Starting to worry a little bit? Uncomfortable? Tell the folks at home how you’re holding up. I’m sure they have every confidence in you. Come on, Roger; you’ve always got something to say.”

3:24

Carrie circled the room and stood behind him. Roger’s head darted left and right, doing his best to see what was going on. She simply stood there, exhaling. He could feel her breath on the back of his neck.

2:09

He felt her hands running through his thinning hair. For the first time, she had touched him.

1:59

He began to scream as his mind rejected all the lies he had been spreading for years. He knew that he didn’t want to die.

“I give up. Get me out of here. I was wrong. I purposely spread misinformation to advance my standing in the community. The virus is real. My mother passed away from the infection last week. I was too entrenched in my own bullshit and the adulation my followers provided to properly acknowledge that. I am responsible for people dying. There is no excuse for what I have done. I am not worthy of forgiveness or your adoration. Your deaths fed directly into my coffers. I have profited while good people suffered from an easily avoidable situation. For all that I am guilty of, I can only offer an apology.”

Ted entered the room and unlocked Roger.

“You have done everything I have asked of you. You have admitted your deception to the unwashed masses. As you can see, the door is open, and you are free to leave.”

Roger rose to his feet and headed out the door.

“One more thing before you go, Roger. Something perhaps I should have told you earlier. See Rog, Carrie, and I have known each other for years. When I decided to put this plan in motion, I knew that she was the perfect wingman to help me out. She doesn’t have the virus. In fact, she works as a nurse at a virology lab. She possesses more knowledge about Trails than anybody else I know. She knew exactly how to present symptoms.”

Roger’s skin began to return to the unhealthy shade of red; it had been in the trunk. Rage rolled over his face. He turned to face Ted once more.

“I would never intentionally infect anyone with the virus. I’m not a monster, Roger. I leave that type of behavior to people like you.”

A single gunshot short-lived Roger’s attempt at charging Ted. The bullet ripped into his right leg. He crashed to the ground grabbing at his wounded leg.

“I told you, Roger, I’m not a monster. We had an arrangement, both sides of which have now been completed. Any further attempt at violence against me will be met with lethal force.”

Ted moved through the room, collecting the chairs, handcuffs, and the digital clock. He loaded everything in the car, watched as Carrie pulled out onto the darkened side road, and headed back inside. He looked directly into the camera and offered the following information.

“To all of you still watching, your leader has been exposed for the fraud he is. If you still want him, you can find him 3 miles off the dirt road just passed the Mile Marker 53 on Route 15. He’s not bleeding that badly, so if you hurry, you might just be able to save him. Good luck and be safe out there.”

Ted cut the live feed, disconnected the camera, and headed out the door.

## That Crazy Driller Killer Steven Pelton

In 1978, John Carpenter released his masterpiece, Halloween, and gave birth to the slasher genre. While Halloween uses very little gore, it created Michael Myers, who would become the archetype for countless numbers of cinematic killers to come.

The 80's were a good time for the horror genre. With Carpenter's success and the influx of directors like Tobe Hooper (who directed some great films like Poltergeist, but is best remembered for a greatly overrated film The Texas Chainsaw Massacre) and Wes Craven, the American public was treated to a new style of horror. Gone were the capes and fangs of the classic Dracula, to be replaced with sunglasses and leather jackets of the new vampire. The Jack Pierce Wolfman designs were soon replaced by the slobber and gore of Academy Award winning make-up artist Rick Baker. Most importantly however was the change from the off-camera, discover-the-body-later murders, as for the first time, effects artists were creating amazingly realistic death scenes, each more gruesome than the one that preceded it. It was in this environment of creativity and shock value that movie maniacs with names like Freddy, Jason, and Chucky found success and made millions at the box office. Not all slasher films found the success and acceptance that the bigger names did, but a few were still pretty good. So with that in mind, allow me to introduce you to The Slumber Party Massacre.



The three most important aspects of making a slasher film are:

1. A high body count.
2. Lots of blood.
3. As much female nudity as possible.

All of these things are critical in a successful flick. The majority of viewers going to theaters to see these films, or waiting until it reached home video, were young males between the ages of 14 and 21 – keep that in mind.

Released in 1982, *Slumber Party Massacre* holds a weird place in horror history, not only for being directed by a woman (Amy Holden Jones, who only directed three mostly-unknown films, but is currently working steadily as a writer for T.V. and film), but also written by famed feminist writer Rita Mae Brown. Shot for around \$250,000 the film was released in November 1982, and went to home video not long after.

The title pretty much sums up the flick. Left alone for the weekend, 18 year old Trish decides to throw a slumber party for her friends. Meanwhile, quite coincidentally, known lunatic Russ Thorn escapes from prison, kills a telephone repairwoman with a giant drill, and takes off in her work van. Trish has confirmed her guest list for the evening and even has the decency to invite the new girl who lives next door, Valerie Bates, who politely declines.

So creepy drill guy hides out in his stolen van, watching the girls as they leave school. One of the girls has forgotten something in her locker and heads back by herself. We all know what happens to her. As nightfall comes, the party is in full swing. As you would expect, one of the girl's boyfriends and two of his friends come sneaking around to scare the girls.

Meanwhile next door, Courtney is bugging her older sister Valerie to crash the party, but she refuses. One of the guys dies in his car after making out with one of the girls (I know I could provide more names, but really most of the characters are interchangeable so does it really matter?).



The girls and guys are now freaked out and try to call for help. As in a lot of these teens-in-trouble movies, the cops think they're just fooling around and refuse to send a squad car out. As the next half hour goes by, just about everybody else is killed. In the end, it comes down to the Bates sisters and Trish who are able to fend off, and eventually kill, the evil driller-killer.

The movie followed traditional standards at the time, with the influence of Ms. Brown poking through from time to time, the best example being when one of the girls breaks the giant drill bit with a machete. The flick found success on home video and a few years later was followed up with a sequel. And if you want to see a movie just mind shatteringly bad, check out the *Slumber Party Massacre II*.

Well that wraps us up for this month. We hope you enjoyed our peek into the dark what if? Be sure to join us again next month when we celebrate all things U.K. Keep in touch with everything we're up to at [www.psychotoxin.com](http://www.psychotoxin.com), and be on the look out for these upcoming releases from PTP.

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