



Sybil's Story Storm

It's raining stories, and it's great to have you here!

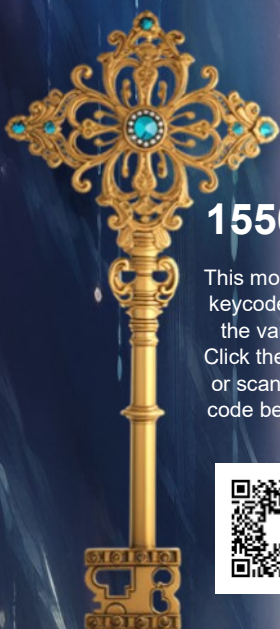
Volume 1, Issue 2

December 1, 2023

Weather Forecast

In this issue:

- Character Introduction: Meet Dash Coffin!
- Results of the Reader Poll.
- New Publication: *HOLE Cards*, Book 1 of The COFFIN CHRONICLES
- Featuring: A chapter excerpt from *FOG3 Investigations: Case 1... In the beginning.*
- In THE VAULT
Four new trading cards featuring characters from August Grove and new artifacts



15505

This month's keycode for the vault. Click the key or scan the code below.



Next Edition:

- Find out who that young man above is and why we care
- Who are Death's Emissaries?
- Meet Tabitha Spencer Pruitt

UMBRELLA Required!

New Publication Alert!



The Story Storm

I'm testing the PDF version of the newsletter to see if it works better than links to separate stories. Let me know what you think. But for now, let's get to it!

The DRIZZLE

December has started at a slower pace, but the drenching continues. The past and approaching holidays added a lot of tension to the publishing timeline, and stress to every workday. Still, a few things were completed, including a new publication. More about that in the MONSOON.

The DRIZZLE [continues >>](#)

The SHOWER

This month, I'm back in the fair city of August Grove, visiting new and old friends. In the past three years, the town has gone from a quiet, sleepy little burg to a fast-growing city. New people, new money, and a truckload of new troubles. Can't have two without the third, and there's so much trouble in August Grove, it takes a battery of heroes to sort it out.

There are three series set in August Grove: The Coffin Chronicles, The Painted Trunk Mysteries, and FOG3 Investigations. One novel from each series will be published by March 1st, with book two of the Coffin



Chronicles out in August.

Which brings me to this month's character profile. Above is one of August Grove's most famous, if not notorious, characters. Meet Dashira Mayaina Coffin, or as most people know her, Dash Coffin. She and her famous enchanted poker deck make their debut in *HOLE Cards*.

DOWNPOUR — In The Vault

There are changes and new items in The Vault! First, a new shelf. I installed a new shelf with more room for the Character Trading Cards. Although all of the initial he trading cards are from

The August Grove Collection, there will be cards from all the other series and a set of eight that are based on books in my dream space. I love the characters so much, I can't wait to see them.

There are no backs for the cards at the moment, but those are coming, as are a sourcing list for supplies and instructions for home printing if you'd like.

More... [continued on page 2](#)

MONSOON!

Two things to shout about, rain pouring all the while.

The big news: On November 30th, *HOLE Cards*, was published. It's the second book in the **August Grove Collection**, and **Book 1 of The Coffin Chronicles**. The ebook and paperback went to Amazon, and the hardcover went to Ingram Spark. I also published the paperback wide at Draft2Digital. We'll see how that turns out.

Also, the first five episodes of *Night Angels* are finished. I'm considering publishing them on the subscription service REAM. *Night Angels* is a spinoff in reverse. It introduces Death's Emissaries, even though the Reapers were born first. It also introduces Angelique



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DRIZZLE

RESULTS OF THE READER POLL

The Reader Poll: Serial or Not to Serial

In a tight race, with one vote deciding the question, the answer was **NO. No serial.** And aww, you were mostly worried about me overworking. Thank you!

More sprinkles, but no need for an umbrella here.

I am bemoaning the state of my plants. This happened last year around this time—my houseplants started looking and acting as if they weren't well. I was new to the apartment, and I freaked, wondering if the space was too dry or not getting enough sun or... That went on and on down a lot list of possibilities. When I first moved in, the space seemed perfect for plants. Large windows, southern exposure, light all day... you get it.

But almost immediately, construction commenced right behind the building where I live, and in less than six months, a structure was blocking the morning light from my windows and balcony. Thus, light worries.

And I've never lived with a heat pump before, so still adjusting to the humidity/lack of humidity issues.

And so, as November comes to a rapid end, my plants are once again showing signs of the season. Last year, Calli, my Alocasia California, went dormant and all visible signs of life ceased. I wasn't sure she was alright until green began to emerge in spring. No panic this year.

Well, maybe a little.

Pete Fiddle, the Fiddle Leaf Fig, on the other hand, is scaring me. A lot. He got some yellow leaves and brown spots, but he made it through last winter in fair condition. This year, however, is much worse. He's already lost leaves, so I fear something is wrong.

Alas, the plant family... more kids to care for. If anyone has advice, please let me know.

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DOWNPOUR

IN THE VAULT

I hope to have a template for the trading cards and directions soon.

There are also some new items on the Artifacts shelf. New Story Orbs, and they have names. They're connected to stories, characters, dimensions... and they're so pretty!

Also in The Vault are the first five chapters of *HOLE Cards* if you didn't get them when you subscribed.

Friends of the Orb

MR. CLEAVE BOURBON

Cleave Bourbon writes beautiful epic fantasy that will steal your heart away. Below are a sample of his many works. Visit his site to see more!



www.cleavebourbon.com

ABOUT THIS STORY

This is Chapter 2 of the first FOG3 Investigations novel, EVEN BONES LIE. Even though this story begins in Athens, Georgia, the main character, Frank Gamble, has strong ties to August Grove and the main character in The Painted Trunk mysteries, Tabitha Pruitt. Frank is introduced in Tabitha's prequel, and is the inspiration for her first novel, FRANK FOGG, GHOST DETECTIVE.

IN THE MIST

The August Grove Herald presents...

In the beginning...

March 3, 2023

“Hey! That’s Armani!”

The man spun around as if seeking the source of the flying chunk of metal. He didn’t seem to realize a bullet doesn’t give a damn about who your designer is.

The second bullet left a scorched patch across the upper arm of his client’s high-dollar jacket. Frank Gamble reached up and snatched the man down to a squat behind the car Frank was using for shelter. “The next time, stay down until I tell you to move.”

With his eyes widened to the size of golf balls, Thomas Belk nodded. He grabbed the arm that would have had a bullet in it if his assailant had been a better shot. When he brought his eyes back to Frank, some of the privilege Belk thought came with having money returned. “I hired you to protect me, Gamble. You’re the private detective. Get out there and stop that lunatic!”

Frank, who had already drawn his weapon, considered assisting the man shooting from across the parking lot. This guy was one of those idiots that not only got himself shot, but got other people killed because he lacked an appreciation of the moment. The moment in which someone else had a gun in his hand and a strong intent to use it. Thomas Belk was the fool who insulted the mugger who held a gun under his nose.

Thank God most people had more sense. In the surrounding stores, people had retreated behind counters and any other solid cover they could find, as random bullets crashed into brick and through glass. He was glad to see most of them were smart enough not to run out and toward harm. Again, he considered the value of the man beside him compared to those innocent bystanders. Frank returned the gun to its holster.

“You hired me to find the man threatening to kill you, Mr. Belk. I did. Sorry, but you can’t pay me enough to die for you.”

Belk reached for his wallet. “How much would it take?”

Frank laughed. “You still aren’t listening. If you had taken my recommendations, this wouldn’t be happening. All Mr. Smote wanted was what any man would want—for you to stay away from his wife. Easy, right? But you believe you should have whatever you want. Are you feeling the want to catch a bullet right now?”

“She’s too good for him.”

“She’s too good for you, too.” Frank exhaled. “Look, Mr. Belk. I’m trying to wait for the police to arrive. I don’t want to shoot Mr. Smote. The man’s got every right to want your head on a platter. But I won’t let him shoot you, either. So just keep



Not every person who lives has a passionate soul.

A soul that fuels a life.

Some of those souls are so fierce, they seem to defy death.

There are two such souls in August Grove.

I am the August Grove Herald.

Hear me.

Louis Jerome Epps, in life, served the public in every way he could. He was a church-loving son, a soldier, and a decorated police officer.

A noble man.

And his is a soul that is too fierce to rest.

In death, Lou still serves, helping to save the living... and the dead. And as always, he works with his best friend, right here in August Grove. Lou Epps is one of three detectives at FOG3 Investigations.

And dead or alive, he’s a damned good PI.

that head of yours down. When he's spent his rounds, I'll move."

Arrogance radiated off the man in waves. As Frank studied him, it was clear the need to take orders warred with the man's desire to give them; but Belk finally nodded and ducked closer to the pavement.

Frank nodded.



Out in the parking lot, Mr. Everett Smote leaned against a car and fired off three more shots. One bullet found the bakery window, but the other two added more holes to the blue Chrysler shielding Thomas Belk. Smote gritted his teeth. He had never fired a weapon before today, but he was improving with each attempt. And he had plenty of ammunition. The goal was to keep shooting, no matter how long it took, until Belk was dead in the street.

The man squeezed the trigger twice more.

Poor man's playboy, that's what Belk was. He had just enough money to mesmerize a poor woman like his wife. She worked in one of Belk's business offices because... well, they needed the money. Everett lost his job almost four years before, even before the pandemic struck. He couldn't seem to get it together anymore. And now this jerk was tempting his Linda with flowers and perfume and invitations to fancy dinners. Making her work late so he'd have time to chat her up. Well, he'd make him regret ever saying hello to Linda Smote.

Click. Click.

Everett reached for the box of cartridges lying on the ground next to his knee. As his fingers extended, the box slid away. "What the hell?"

There was only a second to wonder how this was happening. No wind... no hill to slide on... No matter. He needed those bullets. Everett got on his knees and crawled after the box as it continued to slide along the ground, just out of reach. "Hey, stop!"

When Everett reached the rear of the vehicle, he got to his feet as the box of ammunition took to the air. It stopped moving forward, instead hovering four or so feet off the ground. He stood, his eyes bulging, and gaped at the impossible feat before him. So transfixed was he, Everett Smote never noticed the man behind him until Frank Gamble tapped him on the shoulder.



First on the scene, Officer Clay Roberts found Frank Gamble leaning against a damaged Impala with a pale blond man handcuffed to the vehicle's bumper. The guy had an ugly purple bruise on his chin, but he otherwise seemed unharmed. Another man in a dark business suit paced in the space between vehicles as he screamed into his cell phone. Gamble ignored both men, his attention focused on the hunting rifle and ammunition on the ground at his feet.

Clay shook his head. It appeared Gamble lived up to his damned near gaudy reputa-

ABOUT THIS STORY

This is Chapter 2 of the first FOG3 Investigations novel, EVEN BONES LIE. Although this story begins in Athens, Georgia, the main character, Frank Gamble, has strong ties to August Grove, as does his partner, Lou Epps.

Both Frank and Lou have a relationship with the main character of The Painted Trunk mysteries, Tabitha Pruitt. Frank and his FOG3 Investigations crew are introduced in Tabitha's prequel, and the inspiration for her first novel, FRANK FOGG, GHOST DETECTIVE.

tion. The guy was both a legend and a joke at the station. He scanned the damage to cars and buildings. Today, Clay leaned toward legend.



Frank answered his phone as the APD took Everett Smote into custody.

“You alright, Frank?” It was Regina Wilkes, his other partner.

“Yeah, we’re good, Reggie. I’ve got to go down and give a statement with our client, but the only damage is to cars and buildings.”

“Uh, that might not be true. Vicky Carlson just got off the phone after a very, very long rant. She wants you in her office first thing in the morning. In her words, no excuses.”

A familiar knot formed in Frank’s gut—the one he always got when he had to speak to Victoria Carlson or face a firing squad. “Oh, boy.”

“Yeah.” Reggie was quiet for a minute. “Is Lou with you?”

“Yes, he’s here. You need him?”

“If you don’t need him at the station.”

Frank scanned the parking lot for his partner. Through the chaos of police cars, emergency vehicles, first responders, and reporters, he found him. For not the first time, Frank wondered why, when police officers, or even law enforcement vehicles were around, Lou showed up in his old uniform. And according to Lou, he couldn’t help it.

At least today, there was no blood splashed across the front of his dress blues. Today, Louis Epps might have been any other cop. He leaned against a police car, watching one of their former compatriots, Sergeant Sandra Marley. Frank wished Lou would leave that alone.

“Lou doesn’t need to be anywhere near the station, Reggie. I’ll send him back to the office in a sec.”

“You take it slow yourself, Frank.” She ended the call.

Frank considered his partner as the knot in his gut got tighter. Some troubles don’t end even when you’re dead.

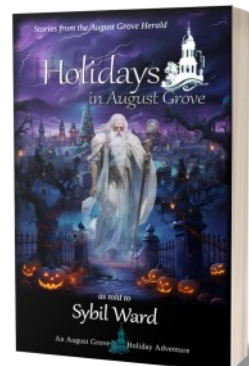


Into the Puddle — Editor’s Notes

That’s it for this edition. I hope you enjoyed another foray into the creepiest little town in America, August Grove. Frank, Lou, and Reggie will be back soon in their upcoming novel, and there are more hints at the fate of August Grove from the Herald, so stay tuned.

And don’t forget. *HOLIDAYS IN AUGUST GROVE* is on sale at Amazon in ebook and paperback. It’s a good, shivery read anytime, but over the holidays, it’s sure to send you to bed with the lights on.

The usual unsubscribe options and such apply, but I hope you hang around. This was fun!



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