



CRYSTAL ORB PUBLISHING

Augusta, Georgia USA 30901
https://crystalorbpublishing.com

Sybil's Story Storm

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

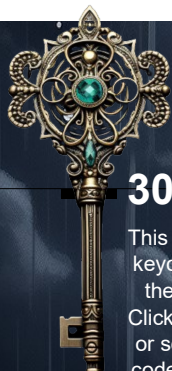
Volume 1, Issue 1

November 1, 2023

Weather Forecast

In this issue:

- This first issue of the *Storm* has arrived. Rain to follow.
- Character Introduction: Meet Condor!
- Thoughts on a new monthly serial and a question for the readers.
- First PUBLICATION *Holidays in August Grove*, a collection of paranormal holiday tales.
- Featuring: In the Mist, a short story from the August Grove Herald



30813

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



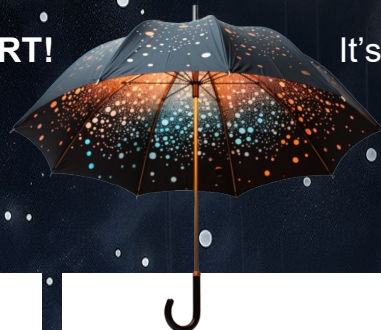
This, by the way, is Emma. She's a resident of August Grove. She *might* be in that serial I'm pondering.



Next Edition:

- Meet Dash Coffin
- Results of the Serial Survey
- Introduction to FOG3

UMBRELLA ALERT!



It's the first issue. Finally!



So, this month, Condor, that handsome fellow above, makes his debut in *Holidays in August Grove*. More about that in the MONSOON. But he's the youngest of his cadre, and the only one born within the last two hundred years. He's all New World swagger with lots of attitude and that "take no crap" from the dead or the living that makes him absolutely yummy!

The DRIZZLE

I'm not sure there is a drizzle this month.

November is starting with a serious storm front. Everything that I've been working on... well, most of it, is going to press, as it were. Not a huge amount for me. So, let's start with the current and work backwards.

The Story Storm

I thought I'd have a problem coming up with items for this volume. To my surprise, my largest problem was selecting from a long list. I finally got the list down to a pair of character profiles, my first publishing announcement, and thoughts about a serial for the newsletter. Enough, right? So, let's get to it!

The SHOWER

There's a distinct pitter-patter of large Reaper feet this month. Ah, you're all new here, so I will explain. I have a burgeoning series relaying the adventure's of Death's favorite emissaries. The Reapers... I should say *my* Reapers, are different from the grim variety that go around marking people for termination and other such sadness. My guys are escorts, meant to help humans make their transition to the next life. That's their only job.

But my guys are a bit on the outlaw side. They try, I mean they *really* try, not to get into trouble interfering in/with the affairs of the living, but...

DOWNPOUR— To Serial, or Not to Serial

That is the question. :-)

I love serials, but I'll admit that streaming services have ruined my patience. Binge watching is a thing now, but sometimes, a little suspense is not so bad.

The point I'm not making

is I'm considering adding a serialized story to the *Storm*, a new chapter each month. The problem might be the MONTH part. That timespan may be too wide to enjoy a story, though the back issues will always be in the Vault.

So, what say ye, be it

serial, or no serial? And remember, we get a entire month to talk about each chapter. And yes, you have to vote without knowing what it's about. :-)

Email me with your thoughts: sybil@sybilward.com

MONSOON!

On October 31st, Halloween 2023, I published my first book ever! *Holidays in August Grove* is a collection of paranormal holiday tales set in that quirky, not-so-little town in Georgia. There are four stories— Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and New Years Ever— four of the August Grove Herald's favorites. It's for sale on Amazon soon, so check back on my site to see if I'm screeching.

And I shan't beg... I can't... I won't! 😊



IN THE MIST

The August Grove Herald presents...

The Vacation

August Grove is like most small towns in the South—hot in the summer, cool in the winter with only a few truly cold days. And everybody, almost without exception, knows everyone else's mama.

In 1966, August Grove was still in a state of village-ness, where neighbors visited, children played throughout the neighborhoods, and there were no fences or locked doors. A lovely place to live, was August Grove, where nothing unusual, strange, weird, or bizarre ever occurred. At least, as far as anyone knew. Crazy things happened in other places.

Until Paul Godwood left town.

Mr. Godwood was a quiet sort. A widower of many years, he was well loved by his neighborhood's children for several blocks around. He gave out the most candy on Halloween, never complained when a baseball ended up in his yard, and was known to patch the inner tube of a bicycle tire unfortunate enough to tussle with tack, nail, or glass. He spent his days doing volunteer work wherever he was of use, or he was at the park becoming the best pal of any and all canine companions. Everyone loved Mr. Godwood.

But he left without a single farewell. Disappeared without a word. Not one tiny goodbye. To anyone.

And he took his house with him.

The Godwood home was a two-story Cape Cod, totally out of place in the neighborhood of single-story ranch homes and bungalows. It stood proud, green shuttered and shingled, boards clapped securely to the sides, bright white, washed and clean. When Mrs. Godwood lived in the house, flowers bloomed in bed, pot, and bowl the year round, from amaryllis to zebra plants, though no one else knew exactly what zebra plants were. Mr. Godwood tried to maintain everything after his wife departed, but his thumb was only green to the nail. In a few short years, only the roses remained.

It was a friendly house, the Godwood home, looming over the smaller houses on the block like a big brother, watching over all. At night, it glowed throughout the evening, its long, deep porch providing refuge for stray cats, a couple of wayward dogs, and at least two families of birds. Yet, on the morning of December 9th, 1966, the neighbors on East Warren Street awoke to find the large lot empty of its house, trees, and plants – bare to the soil.

The owner, the house, the yard – all gone.

The police investigated, the fire department examined, and the town council scrutinized. Not a plank, nail, or pane of glass – nothing of the house, nothing of the man, was found by any of them. It was a spectacular business, written up in all the papers throughout the state. Reporters from the New York Times and the Chicago Sun also called on the neighbors.

They were told the same story by all.

As long, and as often, as I've lived, I often forget just how old I am and who I was during a particular point in time. It's a very odd problem to have.

So, if I had to tell you how old I was in 1966, I might be off by a hundred years or so. But I can tell what happened in 1966. You see, that's part of my job, too. I am the August Grove Herald, and I also relay the past.

Hear me.

August Grove was once a simple town.

Paul Godwood was a simple man.

Until they both weren't.

Volume 1, Issue 1

There was no combustion, commotion, calamity, or confusion. No one roused, woke, heard, or saw a thing.

The house was there at nightfall.

At sunrise, it was gone.

And so was Mr. Godwood.

The detectives sought and found the Godwood children, but they had not seen nor heard from their father for two weeks. Everyone called him once per month, and Dad Godwood was always in good cheer for all. He had made his weekly trips to the cemetery to deliver flowers to Mom Godwood. As for the disappearance of the house, no one dared speculate.

That was 48 years ago.

The lot on East Warren Street remained empty. Members of the family paid the property taxes, neighbors mowed the grass, kids played in the vacant lot, and the legend of the disappearing house grew. Some people said they heard Mr. Godwood scream that night. Others refuted that, but said they heard the ripping apart of the house as it was pulled up and away into some extraterrestrial vessel. Still others, acknowledging the goodness of the man, believed he was lifted up, whole, into Heaven. And loving his house the way he had, well, God just saw fit to let him take it all with him.

The City tried many times to take over the property, but the neighborhood and Mr. Godwood's family wouldn't hear of it. So, the lot remained.

Empty.

Maybe waiting.

Many opinions, ideas, and explanations, but after so many years, no one ever expected to know the truth. The neighbors didn't expect, but they didn't forget.

March 9, 2014.

At nightfall, the lot was empty; the light from a streetlamp pouring out across the green grass as far as it could reach. Fireflies floated in the darkness, and the chirp of crickets kept time with the distant night bird songs.

All was well on East Warren Street.

In the morning, the sun rose into a cloudless sky. Men and women poured out from their homes, ready for a new day. Boys and girls ran out to the sidewalks, on their way to school. The Cape Cod house with the green shutters drank in the morning sun, rested its foundation on the cool green grass, and opened its windows to the sweet morning air.

And Mr. Godwood sat on his porch and waved to the men, women, and children who stood in the street, slack jawed, blocking traffic as they stared at the man and his house.

Mr. Godwood came back.

And he brought his house with him.

He had been gone 48 years.

It was speculated that more than a hundred people interviewed Mr. Godwood. They asked where he had been. They asked how he had gone. And they asked how he returned. As yet, no one has received a satisfactory response. You see, Mr. Godwood wasn't exactly talking. Well, actually, he was talking, just not saying an awful lot.

ABOUT THIS
STORY

This is one of my oldest stories. It was inspired by the removal of a house by truck from a lot. As I watched the truck drive away, I thought, "The Becks are moving to the country and taking their house with them."

This might have been a decade before Pixar's "UP."

Great minds, right?



When asked where he'd been, he said he went on a little vacation. Hadn't been on a vacation since long before the missus passed from this earth. He just needed to get away. Invariably, that led to the question of the missing house. Mr. Godwood said he couldn't speak much to that. He went on vacation. Maybe the house went on one, too. He was just glad it came back in time for him to sleep in his own bed.

Of course, everyone wanted to know where he went. To that, Mr. Godwood said no place in particular. He wanted to be where he could hear it rain, see a rainbow, and watch the sun as it set. He needed a little time to contemplate the moon, admire the stars, and see what faces he could see in the clouds. Where he was, he wasn't sure, never asked for the name of the place because it wasn't important. He was on vacation, after all.

You could guess the answer to the question as to how he returned to East Warren Street in the fair city of August Grove. He came back, of course, the same way he went. Didn't take any longer, and the trip wasn't any faster. It was the same in both directions.

So, how did he travel? That question brought a slightly confused look to Mr. Godwood's eyes. He looked to the ground, and then to the sky, as if giving the question a great deal of thought. And then he smiled. He smiled such a smile that the person asking the question soon began to smile as well. It didn't matter who it was, the person smiled. After several moments of smiling, the person forgot what they asked him. Mr. Godwood then offered them a cup of coffee or a glass of iced tea. They either accepted or prepared to leave, but in either case, they welcomed him home.

Most of those people who asked him questions are the children who used to play in Mr. Godwood's yard. They were the bike riders, the baseball players, and the tea party hostesses to whom he brought cookies. Their children, and some of their children's children, feel no particular need to ask him questions. The house is a puzzle, but it's been posted to Facebook, tweeted on that other thing, and admired on Instagram. They, as they say, are over it. Sometimes a ball lands in his yard, and he throws it back without complaint, his good throwing arm as accurate as ever.

He hadn't aged.

He hadn't changed.



Into the Puddle — Editor's Notes

That's it for this month.

I apologize once again for the failed electronic version. This was to be in the Vault. It'll still be there, along with a snippet (not the entire story) of Condor's debut in *Holidays in August Grove*. Just a bit to let you get to know him.

And don't forget to send me your thoughts on the serial. I think I'm talking myself into it, and at once/month, I believe I can get it done without sacrificing other projects. Still, this is about what the readers want, so let me know at sybil@sybilward.com.

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



Crystal Orb Publishing

Augusta, Georgia USA
<https://crystalorbpublishing.com>