

The Official Stephen King Website Message Board-Members' HALLOWEEN STORY: 2007

LOLA28

The voices are back. If I don't find a way to get rid of them soon I'll surely go insane. It's always the same thing; they scream accusations blaming me for her death. If only they would listen and allow me to tell them that it's not my fault she's gone, but I know that I can't reason with them.

What do they hope to accomplish, he wonders. Do they know that I feel guilty that she's gone? Because I do feel guilty, and why shouldn't I? I'm glad she's dead. Oh, don't get me wrong, I loved my wife, and still do, but I did feel relief when she died. It's the kind of relief only someone who has seen a loved one suffer can feel.

And now, I'm surely having what I can only describe as a panic attack. I can't get out of my car but I have to. The security guard will soon be looking at me as though I'm totally insane. However, I very well might be -- after all what sane person hears voices in the middle of the night?

COLA

Why does this happen so unexpectedly? I need to get my shit together and concentrate. Become aware of my thoughts. Focus on something entirely different. Slow my breathing -- in with the count of seven, out with the count of 11. Slowly I begin to relax. As I reach for the door handle the voices begin to fade... the panic subsides; almost a distant memory. The crawling sensation of someone, or something inside my head receding, as always until the next time. Finally, and once again, in control of Sam Jessup;; 52 years old, successful business mogul.

It's another prissy and, in my opinion, the start of a completely bizarre Halloween night. What a bunch of bullshit

"Hey, Louis, I've forgotten my report due tomorrow morning. Wouldn't wanna mess that baby up!!"
Louis had been working security in the buildings lobby as long as he can remember.

"No problem, Mr. Jessup. Watch out for any ghosts and ghouls running around up there," he mutters.

He signs in gives a casual wave and he's off toward the elevators. Like I believe in that hocus pocus crap. If ghosts were real then we would see them all the time or at least feel them. As he presses for the elevator his mind is on one thing, get the report get and get the hell outta here.

Got my trusty friend Jack Daniels waiting at home, he thinks. The elevator arrives and he steps in, pushing the button of the nineteenth floor. He watches as the lights bounce back and forth. The doors open and he instinctively steps forward. What the hell is going on here? Is this some kind of joke?

ROBERT GRAY

A wave of vertigo passes through him as he steps squarely off the elevator. Jessup knows the sensation. It is the same mix of nausea and unbalance a bottle of Jack delivers right before your guts let go. It is

the downside of being drunk with none of the perks. The disorientation is enough, for now at least, to drive away thoughts of his wife. His eyes focus on the room, but his brain keeps trying to refuse the image. This isn't his floor. It doesn't even look like his building. A few pumpkins and cardboard skeletons are one thing, but somebody went crazy decorating on the company dime. He is looking at some kind of God damned Norman Rockwell Halloween postcard. A barn spreads out before him complete with bales of hay and revelers in sheets and the coarse rubber masks they had back when he was ten. He can hear music coming from somewhere deeper, beyond the piled bales of hay. It is Barry McGuire crooning out against the war, how we are on the eve of destruction. Barry doesn't mean any of the current wars, but another back in 1965. That was the same year his mother marched in support of the Vietnam War. Jessup's father had perished over there and his mother wasn't going to let him die in vain. So, back in October of that year she took her place among the twenty five thousand that followed five "medal of honor" recipients to Washington. That was a Halloween to remember. There were no ghosts but plenty of corpses.

The song echoes through the barn. No. Jessup's mind refuses that. This isn't a barn. It is an office and a damned inappropriate place for a party like this. He takes another step forward, squaring his shoulders and building up that voice of authority in his gut. Someone is going to explain this to him. Somebody is going to get fired.

"Who is responsible for this?" Jessup calls.

He projects loudly with the intent of drowning out the music, only it doesn't work. Another wave of vertigo roils through him. It isn't his voice, just an echo of 1965 when he was a boy, still able to run without pain in his chest. Some of the revelers turn to face him, staring out from behind the rubber masks. Jessup doesn't like the way their human eyes look out of context in the sockets which belong to witches and monsters. Monster eyes would be better or no eyes at all. This is contrast his eyes easily frame but against which his brain recoils. There is something wrong with the scale of the room too. Everything is bigger than it should be, as if he and those in the costumes have diminished in stature to that of children, like his voice.

"Where is your costume, Sam?" a witch asks.

C41

Before he could shut his mouth Sam answered automatically, "No one told me there'd be a party."

His voice had reverted to a ten-year-old, complete with high-pitch and accented with the New England ahs on the end of nouns that he's tried so hard to overcome as an adult. His feet had shrunk inside his shoes, which threatened to fall off. His amazement dissolves into dismay as he recognizes his childhood nemesis, Edwin "Roach" Nichols, dressed in a hobo's rolled-up jeans, torn chambray work shirt, and frayed straw hat. Roach looked at Sam from the hay wagon where he'd been terrorizing Jimmy Marco and Andy Sanders. He turns his attention away from the two boys and sneeringly calls "Spam!"

Sam's vertigo turns to lightheadedness. A buzzing in his sinus revs up, like the punch of wasabi or the membrane-melting burn of fresh horseradish. Sam's lightheadedness is accompanied with a déjà vu, and he instantly knows he's at a party prior to That-Halloween; the one in the same year his father died in Vietnam. His mother had been lucky Sam's body hadn't been added to the turf alongside his father's. It was also the Halloween when Roach Nichols had jumped him in front of the Watorski's house as Sam trick-or-treated.

Roach had pulled a switchblade. He'd shredded Sam's costume and hat, intent on hurting Sam. Luckily Mr. Waterski had turned on the porch light and threatened to call the police before Roach could do more. Sam escaped fatal stabs but bore the cuts (and scars) where Roach's knife had sliced his upper arms, a shoulder, and his forehead.

Now, in this freaky-deaky scenario Bobby Pickett once again sings "Monster Mash", and Martha remarks to the Vandellas she has 'nowhere to run'. Sam is surprised to be grateful for a buzz in his head. He's realized if he sticks around, he would likely relive a horrible, bloody evening brought to you with limited commercial interruptions. He allows the buzz in his head to increase in volume and reflects Roach's intense stare upon him. For a moment, Roach appears both surprised and confused. Sam has defeated the one-track mind of Roach without a word. Sam has stumble-fumbled Roach.

Having distracted Roach, Sam has time to lope around in his loose shoes back onto the elevator. As Sam skids into the car, Roach tries to shake his head clear of its mind-goo and makes tracks toward Sam. Sam watches in horror as Roach nears, with fury and cruelty in his eyes. Roach gets within 15 feet of the elevator, trips over his own feet, scrambles to collect himself and regain his balance. From his sprawl, Roach yells, "Spam! I'm comin' for ya!." The elevator doors smoothly shut from Sam's frantic stabbing of the CLOSE DOORS button. "I don't think so, banana heels," remarks Sam, who giggles once and then sobs as he second-guesses his sanity.

Sam sags against the elevator wall with his heart pounding from the exertion and adrenaline rush. The elevator silently waits for Sam's electronic command. He closes his eyes and wills this evening to be over. The Roach encounter has registered a perfect 10 on his Weird Shit-O-Meter; he hasn't been this sincerely freaked since his wife died. All he wants now is to get the files he needs for his report and get the hell out of here. He rights himself from his panting slouch in the elevator, considers the elevator floor buttons, and...

Kim L.

...decides to get the hell out of the office and come back when Halloween is over and whoever's idea of fun this was is standing in front of him about to get his ass chewed.

"Career-limiting move, poopchute" he says aloud and punches the button for the ground floor, ready to wave bye-bye to Louis and return home to Jack Daniels. Except the elevator stops much too early, coming to a stop on the 13th floor. However, Sam isn't superstitious, and never had been. In fact, he was born on the 13th of August, so the number itself doesn't bother him. It's the look of the button that startles him. It's pulsating, changing colors and almost spinning. It's:

"Groovy," he says as the door opens and he steps out. The tension in his body begins to drain away and he feels the way he used to: easy-moving, comfortable in his skin, almost athletic. I ran track, he remembers. God, that was back in ... in 1969? He looks around. He's outside on his porch, the night air cool on his face. He thinks of Roach Nichols and smirks - a 'roach' wouldn't be so bad right now.

"Trick or treat!"

He leaps backwards, blurting, "Holy shit!" as five costumed shapes of assorted sizes swarm up to him. The children, they must be children, are momentarily shocked into silence, giving him time to remember how much he hates Halloween. He begins to tense up again, and almost screams as someone's warm hand touches his. A shape taller than the others, and not in costume either - Suzanne Waterski.

OzzCowboy

For a moment, a brief hiccup in time, it is 1969. He is 14 years old again, but no. This isn't right, Suzanne Waterski? Holding his hand? He is not 14; he is 52. He withdraws his hand and compresses the bridge of his nose, squeezing his eyes shut, his teeth grinding behind sandpaper lips. The bristle of his fringe tickles his fingers and his eyes shoot open. No, his eyes explode open as he stares down at three witches, Superman and a freakin' alien for godsake's. Fringe? Where the hell did that come from?

"Sammy," she says. Her voice musical and hypnotic, "Give 'em the candy."

He looks back towards the girl that he had loved since first grade, a girl he had never spoken more than two words to; a girl who had laughed at him the night Roach Nichols had tattooed his skin with switchblade slashes. The night his father had...his own father had...

But no, it is all wrong. He had never stood on the porch holding Suzanne Waterski's hand. This was all screwed up, but if he was really here with her. Her sweet scent of lavender wafting over him, could it also mean his father was. His father was...

"Dead," momma had said. "Your daddy's dead Sammy. And, there's nothing we can do about it."

But was there? Sam wipes the fringe he hasn't had for thirty years away from his moist forehead. Could this screwed up night mean... *Holy shit, what is happening to me*, he thinks.

The children, - *they must be children*, he reminds himself once more - reach out to him for the candy. "You don't want a trick, Sam Jessup," Superman says. "No sirree, you don't want a trick."

Dana Jean

And, as if prompted by the East Valley Elementary music teacher, Miss Dylan, young, beautiful, but always oddly smelling of sweet pickle relish and broccoli farts, they all started warbling that old Halloween classic,

"Trick-or-treat, smell my feet, give me something good to eat!"

Before they finish, they're laughing and tussling one another while two of the witches dance and twitch from foot to foot doing the 'I've-got-to-go-potty' dance holding their private parts to keep the pee pee from leaking out and pooling at their witchy little feet.

Suzanne is smiling and laughing next to him, her shoulders shaking and rubbing warm and soft against his arm. Sam manages to tilt the corners of his mouth up just enough to resemble a smile--more creepy than kind--looking wooden and cold like a ventriloquist dummy. Swarming around him, the children hold out their bags, pushing and shoving to get close.

"Guys! Hang on! One at a time," and he mechanically drops a red box of Pall Mall candy cigarettes into the various trick-or-treat bags made from the finest pillow ticking, polyester and hopsack. This whole scene is surreal and Sam prays that a Manhattan minus the cherry in a Kool-aid glass will fall from the sky. His contribution to the little Hallo-weenies midnight tummy aches and salty tears barely plunks onto their ever-growing sugar piles before they turn and run with fading giggles and thank-you's floating back to him. With all the commotion, Sam hadn't been aware of the tune playing in the background.

"Do you hear that?" Sam asked with a hound dog tilt to his head. He turned to look behind him. The Muzak strains of "Icky Thump" by The White Stripes floated out from open elevator doors that couldn't possibly be on this splintery, wooden porch. A song not even conceived yet by kids, well... not even conceived yet. He turned back to take a closer look at Suzanne, to tell her what had really happened, but she was gone and the landscape looked like construction paper cut-outs coming unglued.

Psycho Killer

And just like that, Sam Jessup found himself back in an elevator, the White Stripes now blaringly loud.

*"Who's usin' who? What should we do?
Well you can't be a pimp, And a prostitute too."*

God, he missed Suzanne. Those big, bee stung lips; wild blonde hair, and points all her own sitting way up high. Suzanne was easily the prettiest girl in school and she loved him; he without a father and the constant object of Roach Nichols' scorn. She loved him at least until that Halloween night when they were 14 years old and handing out candy to trick or treaters on her father's front porch.

Sam could vividly recall how he flirted with the two trick or treaters who had shown up later. One of them an overly developed 16 year old dressed provocatively as a hooker who introduced herself as Desiree Cummings. The other an equally delicious friend in a long black wig and revealing black evening dress, flashing vampire fangs under blood red lips and calling herself simply, "Existess."

Suzanne had thrown a jealous fit, screaming she never wanted to see him again and telling him to "Get off my property right now, Sam Jessup!" Sam ran out into the darkness and caught up with the two older girls. The rest of that Halloween night was spent with a hooker and a vampire, an interesting combination Sam would always reflect upon with a smile.

But that wouldn't be the last time Sam saw Suzanne Watorski, not by a long shot. Sam soon found that there is nothing more satisfying than making up, and Suzanne had the best way of making up he'd ever known. In fact, he'd live this scenario and hone his manipulative ways with countless women to come, even with his future wife..

His wife? Sam drifted into a dizzying, mystifying alternate state MY WIFE.

Thought-scenes scurried into the recesses and convolutions of his brain tissue like cockroaches in a New York tenement kitchen evading a sudden light. He had remembered something, something important. A cogent thought loomed on the horizon but he couldn't- quite- grasp- it.

Sam felt rather than saw himself push the elevator button for the doors to open.

Rehevkor

The door began to slide open, but abruptly stopped. The elevator lurched downward a few feet, causing Sam to cry out and grope for the railing. Sweating and sure that he was about to plummet to his death, Sam clutched the rail like a frightened child. The White Stripes had fallen silent; now only a low, sibilant static issued from the speaker.

Sam had no more than glanced at the control panel when the doors *yanked* open, slamming into their slots with enough force to rock the cab. Sam fell against the back wall and stared out.

This time the door had opened on a huge ballroom. Sam could hear big band music in the background, but he didn't think they were going to get a return gig here. The music sounded weirdly out of tune. Then he noticed the revelers, and his thoughts clipped off as if severed by a knife.

They were hunched, twisted, and moved jerkily about to the uneven rhythm of the band. One of them near the door moved toward him.

The creature wore a mask, but it was melted beyond recognition. It spoke with a tired, slurring voice, "Play it again, Sam...but don't you play those bad acid blues anymore," a woman's voice spoke.

He stood frozen in place as she approached. His mind turned to what this creature had said. *Bad acid...didn't Suzanne tell me that she-*

The thought broke off as a hot, lumpy hand grabbed his arm and pulled.

PatTheHat

It's an amazing phenomena of the human brain. Traumatic events can erase an entire lifetime of thoughts and experiences. They can also mix the proverbial "life before your very eyes" gray matter cocktail. Sam suddenly realizes he's having a double straight up and it kicks him like a mule!

Like a collage of snapshots double exposed at the end of a roll of film he is flooded with his past mixed with his present and seemingly his future. The joys and sorrows, the hopefulness and horrors of his life...and love! Even the sounds and smells that could have only been significant to one person in this world.

A sudden clarity of memory explodes in Sam as he realizes the voices no one else can hear are the voices of his past but they no longer reside inside him. They are everywhere around him **LIVE AND ON STAGE!**

The voices of all the dead casting blame to the living.

The voice of his beloved begging him for the relief only he could bring.

The voice of his grieving mother as she slipped into the insanity that started her bizarre quest of longing and love to bring his father back to her, regardless of the price she or anyone else had to pay!

The voice of a bullied little boy, grown to a hard driven success story of a man, telling a secret he regrets he told...told to only one.

Just as Nat King Cole starts to croon "That's Incredible" it's the sound of that man he hears screaming...

"Get your stinking hands off of me you blithering putrefying idiot!!!"

Tery

The melted mask-face turned upward. There should have been eyes behind the eye-holes but Sam saw only darkness. The tired voice emanated from the mouth area, "Oh Sam, I'm not the one who's blithering."

Sam's voice had gone on vacation. He opened his mouth a few times, looking like a dying carp. Nothing would come out. He tried to shove the thing away from him, to close the elevator doors and get the hell out of there. But its grip was inescapable.

"Come dance with me, Sam." The shape began to pull him into the ballroom. The music was louder now. An off-key and horribly slow version of "String of Pearls" floated among the misshapen party-goers. Sam struggled against the *zombie* figure but it was unbelievably strong. He found himself amid the creepy crowd, which began to encircle him.

The dance began. A danse macabre if ever there were one. The eerie, twisted figures moved around Sam in a leisurely ballet, whispering his name as they went past him. His partner *the zombie*, moved closer, he could smell its fetid breath. He looked once more into the melted mask, the endlessly black eyes and, with a sudden strength born of terror, tore himself away. Screaming incoherently, he threw himself into the elevator and began to hit at the bank of buttons. "Come on! Close, damn you!" he yelled at the doors.

The zombies, yes they were - he knew it, began to shamble towards him. His former partner began to laugh. It was a horrible sound; like a pig squealing while choking on its own blood. It removed the mask and Sam saw, to his horror, a green and rotting face - a familiar face - its mouth open in an unholy laugh. He began to pound on the buttons in a frenzy. As the doors finally slid closed he heard it speak one more time, "You can't run forever, Sam!"

Therese Seattle

"The hell I can't, you zombie bitch!" Sam slid to the elevator floor, laughing hysterically. (What the hell; if the elevator plummeted to the ground, the floor was the safest place to be anyway. Sam had read somewhere.)

Jesus, what the hell was up with that dance floor? ("Crazy people walkin' round with blood in their eyes, and all she wants to do is dance, dance . . .") Yeah honey - I'll help you dance. First, just let me tighten that little noose for you . . .

15, 14, 13 - "Ah, to hell with the report." Sam's mouth watered for a bourbon straight up (hell, add a scotch and a beer to it, George). Not that it would help much tonight, though. The anniversary of - well, lots of bad things. If he could take back that momentary leap of trust ("Sam honey, you know you can tell me anything . . ."), he would. But those eyes (hell, that body!) got to him every time. Those eyes - laughing at him (not with him) when Sam told of Roach's slicing and dicing, then holding his head under water while bobbing for apples later. Those eyes - filled with sorrow when he told her of finding his mother - floating naked in the bathtub, head bobbing like those slimy apples - empty bottles of pain pills and gin sitting next to her Daisy razor. Those eyes - filled with contempt, when he finally told her what he did to his old girlfriend, Susan. Those eyes - filled with fear when she realized what she had married. Remembering her body from the second story window dancing gently in the brisk Halloween air - her eyes no longer accusing, at least. ("Cool decoration, Mr. J, " some neighborhood kid had said that night.) Yes, the former Mrs. Jessup had begged to be released from the truth . . . and Sam always liked to give her what she wanted.

10, 9, 8 – the elevator lurched to a stop. “Jesus H. Christ, now what?!” Sam stood up, grabbed his cell phone out of his pocket, fully intending to call Louis about these goddamn faulty elevators (and really faulty tenants). As the elevator doors slowly hissed open, Sam held up his cell phone for a signal and strode onto the 8th floor. Strains of an old Eagles tune floated from the elevator – “You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave . . .”

TBlack

Except this wasn't The Hotel California! He was standing on the high luster polish of a... gymnasium floor? The sign above his head read, Paramount Middle School.

Sam looked down at his scrawny legs & caught the lettering on his gray/green shorts, PMS. ‘*Good Ole PMS, he remembered, 'Where the girls are gunna get it... `cuz it's dangling out our drawers!' He raised his head in perfect timing to catch a volleyball right in the kisser.*

"Well if it ain't Sir Spam-A-Lot." snorted Eddie (soon to be "Roach") Nichols, Oooo! Spammy! Dats gunna leave a mark!" Sam spun around into the push-bar door to the lockers as the small collection of knob-kneed, pimple-faced 8th graders at the net began to chant, "Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam..."

A herd of the cheerleaders were entering just at the moment Sam did a perfect face-plant into the warm, soft and supple goodness of Suzy "Waterbags" Wartorski's ample breasts. He inhaled a long, lingering breath of lavender laced Noxzema & Dove soap as he twisted his open bloody lips across her pristine uniform.

"Why you perverted little dipstick!" screamed Suzanne. She glanced down at her scarlet chest adding, "I oughta kick your ass!" She slammed Sam against the bank of buttons which had suddenly appeared on the wall.

The elevator dinged loudly open and Sam fell partway into the waiting car. Mick & the Boys wafted up through the shaft wailing, *"It's Just Your 19th Nervous Breakdown!"*

Suzanne stared up at the backboard and saw a strange thing. The reflection behind the hoop showed a distinguished businessman in a blue Brooks Brothers' suit but only down to the waist below that it was little Spammy Jessup, bare legged to a pair of crew socks wearing black & white Chucks! Suzy reached out & grabbed his left sneaker... & pulled. Sam at 52 pulled back!

TheMedic

There Sam layed on the elevator floor looking up, all he saw was legs and a pair of white panties.

Holy hell, he thought, I've pulled Suzanne in here with me.

When Suzanne lifted her head it wasn't Suzanne of the past but of the present. "Where the hell are we?" Suzanne asks.

She starts to scream as she sees a reflection of herself in the elevators shiny walls. A minute ago she was a young girl. Now she has graying hair and age lines on her face.

Sam mashes floor buttons, the elevator starts going up and down like a wild yo-yo making Suzanne's

scream even more harsh on his stomach. The elevator starts screaming towards the ground floor, but goes past it.

The elevator slams to a stop along with Suzanne's screaming. The doors open and Sam looks out into his Fraternity house.

"Jesus it must be like 1977..." he trails. He looks toward the far wall and sees his old Playboy calendar confirming his thoughts.

Then the sound of rain starts permeating from his stereo. Then the opening guitar riffs to "Black Sabbath" by Black Sabbath start filling the dorm. There in the corner he sees a man in a shroud with a hood covering his face. Only his hands are showing and they are the color of mercury...

Anni M

Sam does the first thing he thinks of and grabs the screeching Suzanne-thing by its arm and propels it out the door where it tumbles against the shrouded specter. He sees the ghoul sweep over her and nothing more as the door slams shut on its own accord and commences to ascend.

The elevator rises past six...past twelve...past sixteen...and comes to a halt at floor nineteen.

He continues to slap frantically at the buttons with his open palm as panic sets in. For all the motion he is expelling, the little car should be jouncing around on its cables, yet the floor remains solid beneath his feet. His heart pounds a terrible tattoo, thudding faster and harder until he fears it might explode in his chest. He screams into the elevator, into his coffin.

I'm going to die in here, die in here, die in here, plays an endless loop in his mind.

Blindly, he keeps smacking at the buttons. His lips pull back over his teeth, giving him a dry skeletal grimace. His eyes roll like a mad horse's. Sweaty acidic fear pours off him in rivulets. He can smell the stink. He also smells the lovely Suzanne. She is back in spirit. Her sweet scent teases his olfactory sensors. He closes his eyes and inhales, momentarily distracted.

Suzanne's silken voice whispers from the Muzak speakers, "Oh, you thought you could hide sssso much from meeeee. Remember that Halloween night, dear, when you took off with those two girls? I know what you did to them." She twitters coquettishly in a sing-song voice.

Yes, he remembers frolicking with the juicy twosome, Desiree and Existess. He will never forget. After all, they were his first kills! They found Desiree's body in a ravine. Age sixteen and an honor student, the papers had said. Of 'Simply Existess', they found nothing; as if she never existed at all. A rattlesnake hiss replaces Suzanne's melodious chuckle, making Sam jump. He catches his heel, trips and smacks his head on the back of the car.

At this, the elevator starts plummeting down the shaft at a menacing pace. Sam's knees buckle and his stomach flips over as it reaches g-force speed. Suddenly it brakes and the little car bounces up and down as if on a bungee cord. Sam is tossed to the corner like a rag doll. A sickening crunch of bone explodes in his face as his nose connects with the far wall. He draws his aching body into a sitting position. Bubbles of blood pop like tiny red balloons from his nostrils. His lips and chin are soon coated in a shiny crimson mask.

He holds his knees like a little kid and rocks back and forth, thinking. The emergency phone! He crawls to the opposite corner, pulls up his aching body and pries open the box concealing his ticket out of this hellish mess. He snatches at his prize and shakily raises the red receiver to his ear. It grows scalding hot in his fist. He slowly turns to look at it. He is holding a live cobra, its triangular head bobbing and weaving. It springs close, opening its maw to strike. Sam shrieks and whips it against the wall. There is silence. When he dares to look, he sees the red receiver dead on the floor, its cord severed and useless. The elevator doors part smoothly. Sam is now looking onto a suburban street at twilight...

ManOfAction

"When the shark bites, with its teeth..." blares from the red house on the left, "...dear. Scarlet billows start to spread..." he sings in an uncontrolled response.

That isn't funny at all, he thinks as he wipes the blood from his nose on his shirt sleeve, his suddenly plaid shirt sleeve. Another unbidden response fills his nose and mouth and pours onto the pavement as he remembers everything about this Halloween. A few seconds to recover and his legs carry him where his heart and mind do not wish to go -- to the red house and the girl with the curly red hair.

"Why is everybody picking on me?" asks Charlie Brown from the stereo as Sam walks through the door, into a house filled with greasers, hippies, and women in Day-Glo orange miniskirts.

"Hard to believe people dressed like this just 20 years ago," comes a smooth, sexy voice that he knows belongs to a smooth, sexy woman. He turns to face what will become his greatest creation.

"Hello Jen," comes from his lips, which then plant themselves on hers.

"Hey, babe. Wasn't sure you were coming."

"You know I always do."

"Why don't we blow this party and go somewhere--" as her hand moves down the front of his pants, "--else."

"Where would you like to go?"

"Oh, I know a place that's dark, and very, very private."

A sly, almost sinister, smile crosses Sam's face as he takes her by the hand and walks to the door. His hand reaches out to grab the knob and stops short as the doors of the elevator slam open. "Hey, why'd you stop?" asks Jen from behind him, her voice gone from smooth and sexy to a distorted whisper.

His mind conjures up what Jen looked like the last time he saw her, but he cannot help but turn around to face her. The red hair is covered in blood, her red lips are no longer there. Sam backs in terror as her slimy hand grabs his arm and she looks at him with empty eye sockets.

"Thought you wanted to get out of here?" ask the ear-to-ear smiling Jen.

"More than you will ever know," the half of him in the house says in as sexy of a voice he can manage but his ears are in the elevator and can hear those words in a panicked scream he is trying for...

Pale Rider

But that scream is trapped in the elevator, and for all the good it can do him here, it might as well not even exist. He is trapped in this when, with a rotting corpse-thing. He knows why he is trapped here - of course he does.

'Ma Jessup din't raise up no fools,' he is proud to tell anyone who asks, and even those who don't. He's here to kill her again. As crazy as that sounds, he must kill this walking corpse again, and in the same way.

A beetle scurries busily out of her left nostril, and she leads him away from the elevator. He is powerless to stop her, and strangely, nor does he want to. He wants to relive this again - he has perhaps been trying to recreate the perfection of her death ever since that night - this night!

She leads him through the house, out into the garden. The cold air hits him, and he savors it on his skin. Between his office, the elevator, and all the frankly dingy places he has been tonight, he never thought he would be this glad to just get a lungful of good old fashioned fresh air.

He hears the sound of the cute little fountain in the fishpond, and his mind doubles over, almost as if this was happening now for the first time. As they walk, he tries not to look at Jen - she's really let herself go since he last saw her, and instead focuses on what he has to do.

As they approach the pond, he feigns interest and leans over the water.

"Hey Jen, check this out - koi. Just look at the colours".

"Sammy, if you brought me out here to stare at some damn fish, then I'm going straight back inside".

"Just look will ya'?"

He stands back and holds his hand pointing to the pond, almost like a tour guide.

"Fine, but this isn't what I had in mind." She steps past him, and leans over the pool, unaware that it will be the last thing she ever sees.

Behind her, Sam Jessup pulls out his knife. The moon glints evilly along its blade, adding a sheen that seems to scream 'sharpness.' He grabs that luscious red hair, blood clots et al, and pulls her head back. A scream tears out of her decaying throat, past lips that no longer exist. He drags the knife across her throat, and plunges her head under the water, so that no blood gets on him. He holds her that way for 5 minutes, until he is sure she is dead.

He washes the blade in the pool, and is just about to pocket it and return to the party, when he hears a noise behind him.

Jade

"When the shark bites with its teeth, scarlet billows start to spread."

The voice is behind him and slightly to the right. Sam turns and sees the hooded ghoul from his fraternity house. He pockets the knife and stands in front of Jen, hoping in the dim light of the courtyard she is hidden from view. Sam opens his mouth as the ghoul holds up a mercury-colored hand in a 'wait

just a minute' gesture, moving closer, and to the left to get a look. Jen is still in the water and it wouldn't take a rocket scientist to figure out anyone under that long is nothing but dead.

"She was already dead! I didn't do anything!" he says, while thinking - *shit, shit, shit*.

"Fancy gloves, oh, wears old Mac Jessup, babe. So there's never a trace of red."

"Mack the Knife, good song," Sam says. "Except it was 'Mack Heath,' not Mac Jessup and I don't even have any gloves." Stupid, he knows, but its time to figure this out.

He pinches the bridge of his nose, it's still bleeding freely, and the throbbing of it is really starting to piss him off. He can't think straight with the pain and thinking straight is what he needs to do. His sleeves are dripping from holding Jen's head under the water and on a night this chilly he is sure a nice case of pneumonia is in his near future. Great, he thinks, *just great*.

The ghoul comes to the side of the fish pond and peeks around Sam. "She was already dead?" the ghoul asks.

"Was," Sam says spitting blood to the ground. Through his swollen, dripping nose he can smell the ghoul, a mixture of sewer and rotting meat. Maybe his broken nose isn't such a bad thing after all. His eyes begin to water and he steps away from the ghoul and begins walking quickly towards the doors expecting a hand to grab his shoulder just before he makes it through. That *is* what Halloween is all about, right, some thrills and chills. Sam has had enough of Halloween. He opens the door and just as he is about to step through the voice comes from directly behind.

"Could it be our boy's done somethin' rash?" Sam hadn't heard the ghoul move, yet now he was behind him. Sam can feel the ghoul's hot breath on his left ear. He runs into the room. The party is in full swing and his nose throbs with the beat of Mack the Knife.

He sees the elevator across the room placed between two bookshelves as if it was the most normal place for an elevator. He weaves through the crowd, bumping into people, but not caring. If he can make it to the elevator he can get on, pray it goes to his office, get the files he needs or not, either way he's out of this crazy night. He refuses to look over his shoulder, the ghoul will be there he knows, blubbering song lyrics and maybe raising a knife. Sam slides to a stop in front of the elevator and pushes the only button on the wall. There are no floor lights above the elevator and Sam decides he doesn't really care, he just wants out.

The elevator makes a pleasant 'ting'-sound and the doors slide open. He's about to step in when he realizes someone is already in there, standing at the back. He starts to back pedal as his tired, alcohol deprived mind realizes who it is.

"Mom?" he whispers.

A hand pops out of the elevator grabs Sam by the nose and drags him in. He has time to inhale deeply and start to scream before the elevator doors slam shut.

Julien C.

"Mom, come on that hurts! What did I do?"

But you could see something within her eyes, this isn't his usual mom. Yet, his mind is playing tricks on him within as a boy and as an adult. That's one mixed bag of nuts. Hell, his body is playing tricks on him, he's just a kid.

Something inside Sam told him Susan was just a creature, the same instinct that made him push the screaming thing into the fraternity room. The trouble was, he remembered this evening, and knew where this was going. Looking around confirmed it, as his mother dragged him towards the bathroom. When he was 7 years old, those awful lamps in the corridor confirmed it. His kicks were useless, the lamps on the table were the only casualty, just like the first time it had happened. It had to be that night.

"It's only bath time, relax." Oh yes, instincts, even as a kid he saw what she said was bullshit, clear as day. She just started pulling my hair angry, out of nowhere, having her mind already wrapped in wanting to be angry. How could I not know something was up, my mother had never bathed me, not even as a young child. There was the bath, carefully filled, the room immaculate as always. His mother's hands were holding Sam steadily; as she threw him into the water. Careful to hit his head on the way in, trying to avoid splashing, avoiding a dreadful mess. She pushed Sam under the water, his little body slightly stunned and struggling for dear life. His mother, with a frantic expression, couldn't believe how easy the movies made killing look -- those bastards.

"Why won't you die?" she whimpered between gasps.

Sam's body convulsed in and out of the water, striking into air, gasping for breath. Her hand lost her grip, slipped, and so he bit with all his force. As a streak of blood came into the water, spreading and diluting within the waters embrace.

Sam lunged himself forward, out of the tub. His mother in shock, was not sure what to do. But Sam did what had worked so well last time, and threw the scale at her with all his might, running away without seeing where it even landed. She just dropped to the floor and began to sob. He bolted away, uncertain if she would chase after him this time.

"What do I do now?" This was déjà vu, but more than that, this time he heard horrible music. It sounded so sweet right now, as "*...you spin me right round...*" played in the background. He had always detested the song, yet it meant elevator. He knew his "mother," would come tell the 7 year old --him-- that night, "It's our little secret now". That and he'd have to go kill the dog, the next day, with Dad for biting Mom.

Sam stepped into the elevator, and pressed the lobby button. Mumbling as he did. "Come on, be that easy, just go to the floor. You are an elevator, you know." He rubbed the control panel gently, trying to caress it with his voice. "I know you can do it."

Sam felt the elevator begin to move down when the lights shut off. He began to scream; but it was still moving. Using what little light his watch gave out, he tried to read the little digital readout. What ever happened to a damn bulb and number?

It said floor: 1. Sam began to now scream in celebration, while kicking at the door. In acknowledgement it began to open. His laughter and joy turned into a frown of dismay and disgust. Very funny! He was standing in a restroom. a filthy truck stop restroom. With walls painted with grime, half the toilets clogged, flickering lights, broken bottles, oh and that charming stench. Then it hit him, he remember this place; it actually made him smile. It was also the perfect occasion to relieve himself at least. He could have gone anywhere in the room and it probably wouldn't be noticed. Sam definitely recognized this

memory, it really made him begin to wonder, what if each floor was offering him something.

This filthy horrible little shit stop in the middle of nowhere. Yes, this is where he had met up with that fucking roach. The older, him that is. Fumbling through the multiple pockets of an old combat assemble of his fathers, his fingers itched it -- razor wire.

JULA

The scent of defilement was quite pungent, almost to the point of being unbearable. Sam took his hand out of his pocket and placed the assemble down on the sink, and looked up at the small, open window above the garbage can. A mixture of grayish, charcoal clouds were hovering low across the sky. Their sense of foreboding made him wonder if perhaps, this was hell, and maybe he was receiving penance for the atrocities that he had inflicted upon the living, by suffering a worse fate. The thought of never seeing his wife again was more than he could bear, but, perhaps this was the justice that he deserved, after all there was no place in heaven for murderers.

A gust of fall blew in from the window, reeking of urine and old leaves and something else too. It sickened him to breathe it in, but, there was little else he could do. He looked down at his hands, they were soiled and covered his own blood and felt disgusted. *What a mess*, he thought, as he reached down and twisted the squealing silver handles clockwise on the sink.

A low-bass hum started from somewhere inside the wall, followed by the slow drudging of backed-up pipes, rusted from negligence and decay. Splotches of green, murky liquid poured out into the sink, sputtering and coughing in chunks. Sam backed away, his hands raised to his shoulders as if he were being held hostage by the green, swampy mess. He stepped back bewildered while he watched it bubble over into a heaping, mutated blob on the floor.

The horrific scene reminded him of a sci-fi comic book that he'd read once as a boy. A green alien substance was brought back from another planet by astronauts for research. It eventually grew and expanded in size, mercilessly swallowing everything and everyone in it's path, until it was finally destroyed by the heroic efforts of the men in green.

Sam was almost sure that this was going to be a replayed version of it, in a small backed-up bathroom on some alien world. Only In this version, Sam knew there wasn't going to be any men in green coming to the rescue. He slowly backed up against the bathroom stall, his legs feeling limp and tried to feel around for the handle behind him. Finding only a metal opening, he slipped his finger through the hole and unlatched the door. It swung open, stepped inside and slammed it shut, locking it securely in place. He planted his hands against the walls on either side of the stall to steady himself.

A stench, worse then old urine invaded his nostrils, and he felt sickened, by it. His insides turned as he bent over the bowl, and saw the waste that was left behind, almost certain that he was going to throw up at any moment. He watched the door, frightened like a little boy curiously waiting for his worse nightmare to jump out of the closet... to scared to move.

The sounds of footsteps thumped wetly on the floor, splattering chunks and pieces of rotted flesh and bone across the already stained tiles.- Slowly and deliberately making it's way to the first stall where Sam cowered in fear on the other side. Old tennis shoes, like the kind he use to wear back in the 60s, stopped just below the door, they were covered in mud and grime.

There were two Initials R.N. on the front of one of the rubber squared toes and he recognized it from somewhere at once. It was the shoe of... of... *Oh shit!* he thought, as his eyes widened. He looked toward the door again, fully aware now that what waited on the other side wasn't from another planet, but, it was... it was...

“Saaaaaam!” A voice watery and preternatural spoke with vehemence.

Sam's mouth opened wide in silent horror, a scream slowly emerged from somewhere in the depths of his being, but became stifled by the smell of rotted flesh. He backed away, struggling to climb on to the toilet, nearly slipping on the wet porcelain.

He gasped and choked as he struggled to find his voice. The door began to shake and rattle with monstrous force as it struggled to pound and claw it's way in. His thoughts raced and his heart pounded at full maximum, until it felt like either one might explode any second. “STOP!” he screamed, “STOP!... STAWWWP!”

The banging and the clawing ended abruptly, and the bathroom became as disturbingly silent again as a tomb. He looked down at the floor and saw there were no shoes, only the green murky mess of where they had stood remained. Grabbing the top of the stall he stepped down and cautiously approached the door. He peeked out in between the crack of the entrance and the divide. A single eye scanned for any signs of the invader, but there were none, there was nothing but the cold, dank, emptiness of the men's room.

Carefully, he unlocked and opened the partially busted door and waited to see if Roach would come jumping out of nowhere, guts oozing and all, but there was nothing, not a single stir. Only the sound of the wind outside, howling through the trees, carrying the last few remaining leaves as they rustled against the ground.

He stepped out, hesitant and fearful at first and looked around. The tiled walls were cracked and covered in mold. Most of the urinals were vandalized beyond recognition, and the floor was a gruesome blend of dark colored swamp water and urine stains. He spotted a shiny, silver object protruding out from the green matter on the floor. Sam squinted his eyes to see and walked over and bent down to get a better look. It was small and resembled part of a tumbler key, too small to be used for a normal door, he thought, but just small enough to fit into a cabinet drawer. He looked around for something that he could use to retrieve it, and found a rusted, oversized safety pin underneath the sink. Careful to avoid the reeking mess, he slipped the pin through the single hole and lifted it out. He studied it, turning it this way and that, trying to figure out what it was suppose to mean.

The slow, creaking sound of a door opening startled Sam from his thoughts, and the smell of swampy fungus and death permeated the air. He lifted his head and stared at the wall straight ahead, an icy cold fear gripped him, as he realized that he'd been had. Slowly, he rose to a standing position, his chest rose and fell in rapid succession with his breathing, as thoughts of dying and pain relayed through his mind. He slipped the key inside his pocket and fumbled for his dad's combat assemble on the sink to his right, but felt nothing but the cold, wet porcelain beneath his fingers. Panicked, he looked and saw that it was gone, and then it occurred to him where it was.

Footsteps lifted and fell, heavy and wet against the tiled floor. Sam realized that there was only one way out of here, and turned ready to face Roach with brute force. Roach, stood there in his soiled clothes half rotten and decomposing, holding up the combat assemble in his hand as if to tauntingly say: is this what

your looking for? Sam's eyes widened, half crazed & determined to get it back or die trying, he clenched his fists together, feeling the rush of adrenalin pulsing through his veins.

"AHH..." a combat cry resounded as Sam charged his arch nemesis, plunging into his mid section and knocked him to the floor with a hard thud. Sam fell on top of him, his breathing erratic and heavy from the physical exertion and began choking him as hard as he could. Roach's hands and legs twisted and writhed beneath him as he banged his head against the floor. Bits and pieces of his fractured skull fell away, leaving cracks and holes. Sam squeezed his eyes tightly, trying to block out the sight of broken bone and rotted flesh as he continued to squeeze with all his might. "I've...got...you...stay... DEAD!"

The body became lifeless in his hands, no longer moving and struggling. Sam stopped and slowly opened his eyes. Much to his horror, it was no longer Roach's esophagus that he gripped in his hands, but his own. His eyes wide open and mouth agape, from having died violently. Sam, released his grip and scrambled back, slipping and sliding on the green sludge as he struggled to get as far away from the body as he could. Frantically, he looked around for the doors or any door, desperate to escape. "Help ME!" he yelled.

In the mirror a dark apparition appeared on his left, it's face hidden in the shadow of a blackened hood. Sam caught the sight of it moving from the corner of his eye and turned, recognizing the creature at once, he pleaded: "Help me, I need to get out of here!" The creature only turned and looked solemnly towards the washroom exit. Sam's eyes followed and saw the elevator doors open expectantly. Without looking back, he staggered towards them and collapsed inside. Falling into a black dream of oblivion as (Sweee-e-eet Dreams Baby) played from somewhere inside the bowels of his consciousness...

La Belladonna

Sam's eyes flutter open. It takes him a moment to realize that he is still stuck inside the nightmare elevator. Both the UP and the DOWN indicator lights are lit up, and the cab is moving smoothly along, but Sam can't determine which way it's going. His hands are shaking, his clothes are drenched with sweat, and his stomach is tied in knots. He's disgusted in himself. "Get a hold of yourself - damn it," he mutters.

Sam begins to feel the more familiar emotion of anger overcome his nauseating fear, "That's better boy".

What in the hell is happening, he wonders. Hopefully there wouldn't be a floor for each of his kills. He thought back over his long and secret career. That would mean at least 30 more stops before this shit ended.

"No," he whispers.

"No." he says a bit louder as he stands up. He is Sam Jessup. He is in perfect control of himself and his life. This bullshit will be brought to an end because no one has been allowed to pull his strings since that Halloween night when he stepped up to home plate and batted the ball out of the park. The same Halloween that Roach sliced him up as Suzanne watched and giggled; the Halloween he took matters into his own hands.

The elevator was still moving along, but all around him was silence. After he got away from Roach, his gang and that bitch, Sam had run home. He let himself into his dark house. "Mom," he called, "where are you?"

He was angry, humiliated, scared, and in need of some comfort. The cuts Roach had made stung. Sam thought he heard a noise coming from the upstairs bathroom. So he climbed the stairs to see light seeping from under the bathroom door, and knocks on the door softly. With no answer, he pushes the door open to see his mom in the big old tub.

Something inside him said, *just leave*. But his feet move him toward the edge of the tub. His mom is passed out in a tub of water. He looks down and notices bottles of pills and an empty scotch bottle. His mom is holding a pink Daisy razor in her right hand. He picks up her left hand and turns it over to look at her wrist. He has done this ritual before. There are some small nicks and cuts on her wrist, but nothing life threatening. He splashes some water onto her face to wake her up. She mumbles something and takes a swipe at her face before passing out again. All Sam feels as he looks down at his beautiful but weak mother is contempt. She has done stunts like this many times since Dad had died. If she's not trying to kill herself then she's trying to kill Sam. Even at his young age he has realized she craves attention and thrives on drama.

Sam stands staring at her. He then vows himself to never cave into those lesser emotions of love and caring because they only lead to weakness, humiliation, and sadness, as well as a total loss of self control. He fills with rage.

He goes downstairs to the kitchen and selects a very sharp little paring knife from the drawer. He climbs upstairs at his mother's side. She is still passed out. Sam grabs her left wrist because she is right handed. He gazes at the big blue vein running under her white skin. He understands there will be no going back. Sam feels a deep dark welling of power rise up inside of him. He slices down into his mother's wrist. Blood wells up, and he drops her hand into the tub. Sam is mesmerized by the crimson designs her blood is making in the water. He drops the knife into the tub on her right hand side. His mom never wakes up. Sam waits a few minutes before running over to the neighbor's house for 'help'. Mom's death is ruled a suicide, and Sam felt for the first time the power that goes along with getting away with murder. This wouldn't be the last time he feels that power.

Sam is jerked from his reverie by the elevator's sudden stop. He clutches at the smooth walls trying to remain on his feet. Sam steadies himself and steps away from the back wall towards the elevator's doors. He doesn't care anymore. He is ready for anything that the doors will open to reveal. The trip down memory lane has re-invigorated him. He knows who he is, and he knows what he is capable of. He brings terror into others' lives. Sam is not the terrorized.

"I'm smarter than the average bear," Sam says in his best Yogi Bear voice. A mad giggle bubbles up from his chest. The doors begin to shake, and, suddenly, the Muzak strains of "To All the Girls I've Loved Before" burst forth from the cab's speakers. The giggle ends as the doors slide slowly open.

"Bring it on, Boo-Boo," Sam yells, "I'm ready for ya!"

KITTEN

"..for all the girls I've loved before..."

Sam listened to the words of the song as he reminisced about the ladies in his life...his mother, Desire, Existess, and especially Suzanne. The music becomes faint as the elevator stops moving. A horrible screeching sound comes from the floor and it vibrates to a point nearly unbearable to his feet. Something strikes the elevator doors with a loud bang.

The elevator begins to move...not up...not down. The elevator begins to move forward...fast. The floor rumbles. The elevator jerks to a stop and the music is now gone. It is totally quiet.

What floor am I on, Sam thinks and then, am I seeing things? The elevator lights show he is between the 7th and 8th floors. *How can that be right, his mind races, am I going to get out of here?*

The elevator doors open. The room is empty and dark, except for a large, bright array of light emitting from a hole in the floor in the center of the room, leading up through a hole in the ceiling. Within the light beam are many small, tubular, rotating lights. They remind Sam of lit-up strands of spaghetti. The lights are making a whishing, humming sound as though they are full of a supernatural power.

Sam slowly walks out of the elevator, toward the beam of light and looks around. "Is anyone here?" he asks.

The elevator doors shut and disappear.

Sam hears a series of sounds as though plastic were being pulled from a hard surface.

Ssssssspph!
Ssssssspph!
Ssssssspph!

The sounds come faster and faster. Ssssssspph! Ssssssspph!

As Sam hears the sounds two more times, he turns to an empty wall and sees two shadowy figures pulling themselves from the walls.

Ssssssspph! Ssssssspph!

Oh my God, he thinks while watching in horror, who or what are these things pulling themselves off the walls!

He walks closer to the light, hoping the light will bring him safety. Sam peers into the hole of light. It's the elevator shaft. Something evil is at the bottom.

The images are drawing closer to him. Sam tries to count them. There are at least 30. Sam can see their disfigured faces, and smell the rot of their deteriorated bodies. They have deep gashes in their arms, necks and faces. One image has a big, dark, red, blotch of soaked blood on the front of her shirt, her heart still throbbing under it. She is dead because her soul left her body before her body died. She is a Zombie. The faces are familiar; Desire, Existess, Suzanne, and the others.

Sam feels someone behind him lightly stroking his hair and humming a familiar tune from his childhood.

"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine..." A hand comes to rest on Sam's shoulder. For some reason, Sam is not afraid of the hand. The soft, soothing hum reminds him of a time in his life when he was safe. Sam reaches out to touch the hand and finds it to be cold and clammy. Sam jumps. The hand grabs his hand. It is not attached to a body. Sam screams and throws it to the floor. He hears a little cry, "Ouch!" The hand is still moving.

A figure reaches down, picks up the hand and places it on her shoulder. The fingers immediately start stroking the lady's hair. Sam recognizes the woman.

"Mom, mom! I didn't do that. I didn't cut your hand all the way off!"

"I know, son. I pulled it off the rest of the way myself. It was just hanging there and I was tired of getting it caught in drawers and closet doors. Now I can just put it in my pocket or prop it upon my shoulder."

"Spam! Spam! Here I am!" Sam turns to see Roach. A dead Roach at that!

"Son, I told you never to talk to your brother that way!"

MISS KITTY

What the hell is going on here? Sam thought as he looked around at the faces of his victims. They were all here, even a few he'd forgotten about over the years. There was the pretty hitchhiker he'd picked up on a cold, rainy night in '89; the one he'd tortured for hours, slicing her flesh from her bones one section at a time. "*Don't worry, this won't hurt a bit,*" he had told her, savoring each and every scream until she screamed no more. There was the file girl from the first office he worked in who had disappeared shortly after he had started working there, '81 that had been. The slinky brunette he'd killed while screwing in Old Man Miller's corn field, the skinny blonde with the big tits he'd followed home from a bar one night, Jen, who's throat he had slit by the fishpond, Desiree, Existess, Suzanne, Roach, his mother -- the list went on.

He tried to back away from these nightmarish creatures, the creatures he had created, but there was no where to go. The zombie-things from his past were circling around him, closing in on him, bearing down on the monster who had made them suffer intolerable pain before mercilessly ending their lives. It was his past coming back to bit him in the ass, his karma for all the unspeakable acts he had performed over the years.

This is it, this is how I am going to die, he thought to himself as the ghosts of his past closed in. An almost eerie calm settled over him at that thought, the calm of acceptance that his reign of terror in this world was finally going to end. "Just do it then," he said to the mob, "Just get it over and done with. Take out your revenge for all the horrible things I did to you."

"That would be too easy, Sam."

The mob stopped their advance, as if on cue. He couldn't see the owner of the voice, he didn't need too. He would know that voice anywhere. It was the voice of warmth, of compassion. It was the voice of the only woman who had ever loved him, who he had ever really felt anything for other than hatred. It was the voice of—

"No, please God, no. Not you," Sam fell to his knees, sobbing into his hands, "Anyone but you."

"Why not me," the voice responded, "Of all the women, of all the people you have ever had in your life, why not me?"

"Because, I didn't kill you," Sam whispered in defeat. He felt defeated. Big tough Sam Jessup, prominent business mogul, serial killer, monster. He was scared of no one, he was unfeeling and

uncaring -- until now. Now he felt like a scared child running blindly in the dark, trying to escape a boogeyman which was all too real.

"Just because you didn't cut me up or strangle me doesn't mean you are innocent of my death." The voice was closer now, moving forward through the swarm.

"I...I...I couldn't do anything to help you!" Sam pleaded to the voice, "You were too far gone. There was nothing anyone could do! I saved you!"

"Saved me?" The tone of amusement was unmistakable in the voice.

"Yes! That's right," Sam exclaimed, sensing room to negotiate, "I saved you!"

"And how do you figure you saved me?" the voice inquired.

Sam thought about the answer before he opened his mouth. He had to be careful now. He could feel his sanity on the verge of snapping and knew he must keep it together long enough to get out of this. "I couldn't stand watching you suffer anymore," he confessed, "It was just too hard."

"Oh, but you could watch the rest of us suffer with no problems!" a voice cried, and he immediately recognized it belonging to Desire.

"That was different. I didn't give a damn about any of you!" He knew he'd made a mistake as soon as the words were out of his mouth.

"Yes, we know. And that is the problem which faces you today, my darling. You never cared for anyone but yourself." There was venom in that voice now and the words cut into Sam like a knife. Hearing her call him "my darling" after all this time was too much for him. Sam raised his head and looked into the eyes of his dead wife. She looked the same as he did the day they were married; beautiful auburn hair pulled back in a braid, green eyes smiling at him from their place above her sensuous red lips, her ample breasts covered by the white silk of her peasant gown.

As Sam looked into the eyes of this beautiful vision of his wife, she began to change. He watched in horror as her flesh turn from beige to gray, and then to black and dissolve off of her face. Her lips split violently in a stream of blood. There was a nauseating pop as her left eye burst in its socket, spraying him with a mixture of blood and sickening yellow goo. Sam let out a scream and tried to cower but a hand grabbed his shoulder and held him in place.

"Look at me, Sam. Look at what you did to me."

"No!" he shouted, trying to escape the wife-thing's clutches. "Let me go!" Sam felt a hand grab his face and abruptly turn it to his wife. "You take a good look at what you have created, Sam Jessup. Take a good, long look."

"I DIDN'T KILL YOU!" he shouted. He lurched back, breaking the hold on his face and letting out a long, agonizing scream as the dead fingers ripped his flesh to the bone.

"YOU DID!" the voice of his wife boomed so loud it hurt his ears, "Did you really think I was so stupid that I didn't know you were putting poison in my drinks? Did you think I couldn't taste the bitter

almond in my food?" she shouted, "I thought you were doing it out of love, not wanting to watch me wither away from the cancer. Then I found out your little secret."

"No!" Sam proclaimed, "You weren't one of them!"

"ENOUGH!" the wife-thing boomed again. "It is time for you to give back for what you have done, Sam Jessup. It's time for payback." With that she pulled a long, silver object from the waistband of her dress and held it up in front of Sam's eyes.

The zombies were crowding around him again, blocking his view, but not before he got a good long look at the thing she was holding. Oh yes, he knew the object well. He had used it many time on his victims and considered it his favorite tool. He had even entertained the idea of using it on his wife several times when she was alive. Sam let out a low groan at the thought of what they were going to do to him, knowing full well he deserved whatever they did, but dreading it just the same.

"Don't worry," whispered a voice in his ear, "This won't hurt a bit." The zombies grabbed Sam's arms and legs, hoisting him into the air above their heads. He knew there was no point in fighting it, it wouldn't do him any good. He allowed his body to go limp as the cold dead hands carried him off to whatever place they had in store.

Faintly he could hear the sweet sounds of John Fogerty, "...don't go out tonight, it's bound to take your life, there's a bad moon on the rise," and thought, *no shit, Sherlock, thanks for the informative news flash.* Suddenly the hands holding him vanished and he fell to the floor with a painful thump. He saw bright flashes of stars as his head smacked a floor that seemed too hard, as if made of stone.

Sam slowly propped himself up to his elbows and looked around. The light was dim but he clearly saw through the murky darkness. He could see the zombies standing in rows about twenty feet in front of him, his wife in the position of power at the front, their dead eyes staring at him from within their rotting sockets. He'd never felt so afraid - so terrified - in his life.

"What are you waiting for?" he asked, not liking the waiver of his own voice.

"You of all people should know that the time needs to be right before anything can be done." his wife answered. She was standing with her decaying arms cross over her chest, a grim little smile exposing brilliant white teeth behind her death mask.

The time to be right? For a moment Sam wasn't sure what she meant, but then it clicked. *Oh dear God,* his mind screamed. His mind raced with flashes of the past. He could see in vivid detail every murder he had ever committed as they flashed before his eyes. His senses were bombarded with the smell of their blood, the taste of their skin, the sound of their screams as he cut them again and again, plunging his instrument into the soft parts of their bodies. It was an overload his senses just could not handle. Sam let out a long, terrified scream as his eyes rolled back in his head. The last thing he heard was his wife sadistic laughter.

Then the world went dark.

When he came too he was unsure how much time had passed but he was in the elevator. John Fogerty had given way to the punk sound of Joey and the boys singing, "...twenty, twenty, twenty-four hours to goooo. I wanna be sedated."

Sam stood up, grabbing the hand rail to steady himself. It was time to get the hell out of this fun-house once and for all. He reached for the buttons and was about to press the one marked L for Lobby when...

MiamiHeat

...the elevator car shot upwards with a violent lurch, and then screeched to a rapid halt, throwing Sam backward against the elevator wall, for the umpteenth time during this entire unpleasant experience. Although in a daze, he could still smell the fading, fetid stench of the zombies. At this point, Sam was pretty much numb to its effect.

He shook his throbbing head to clear some of its cobwebs, then gazed at the elevator buttons – 12th floor. *I don't think I've stopped here yet on this exciting journey, Sam thought rather humorlessly, what merriment might await me here to help incite a stroke or heart attack?*

With a creaking groan, the doors slowly slid back, revealing another peculiarity. Outside the doors, Sam gazed upon a long, antiseptic-looking corridor, with shiny, off-white linoleum tiles. Down the center of the corridor, a sort-of trail existed, composed of tiles of contrasting red. As the Ramones faded off in the distance behind him, Sam stepped out of the elevator into the hallway. This particular passageway had large, heavy-looking doors on each side; some open, some closed. Outside of each door was a number in stainless steel letters, along with a wooden document holder.

As he crept down the corridor, he began to hear faint beeping sounds coming from some of the rooms. Sam took notice of some Halloween decorations on the walls, pumpkins, witches, and such. As he passed a bulletin board under glass, he saw a placard reading, “*Happy Halloween, 1981.*” Unfortunately, he also noticed, in his reflection, the rather awful hairstyle and wide-collared shirt he'd worn back then. *Wow, was that really ever in fashion?* Interestingly, the shirt bore the bloodstains from Sam's earlier adventures.

He came upon a round, open common area with a large circular desk in the center. More decorations sat on and around this large reception desk. No one was sitting on the three chairs within the desk area, but as Sam approached, he noticed a sign that said “St. Gilead's Medical Center - Cancer Unit.” He didn't bother to sign in on the Visitor form.

God, I know this place. I can certainly remember the room number now -- 1279.

Sam continued on, past the other rooms. He stared straight ahead, following the red tiles, ignoring the beeps, groans, cries, gurgling, and splash-plops he heard from a few of the rooms. A rather large, splash-plop emanated from room 1235. *Bedpan in use*, Sam thought crazily.

Sam stopped at room 1279. He glanced at the odd decoration on the wall outside this room. He first saw a pumpkin with a tongue sticking out of its goofy-looking mouth. Looking more closely, he saw that the pumpkin face closely resembled good ole Roach. The protruding human tongue was split almost in half, with coagulated blood on it. On the floor below, in a pool of blood, Sam saw an apple with a bite out of it. There was a razor blade sticking out of the bite mark. *Ouch, I guess that's worse than finding half a worm*, Sam thought. Sam quickly grabbed the pumpkin and threw it farther down the corridor. It splattered on the floor with a sickening sound, and the pumpkin guts that spilled out didn't quite match those found at a Sledge O'Matic demonstration with Gallagher. *That Roach is a real pest.*

Sam stepped into the room, and around the drawn curtain in front of the single bed. Sam knew damn well who the patient was. An IV, along with an electronic body systems monitor, connected to the bed's

occupant via needles and sensors. The monitor beeped in a normal, constant rhythm.

Sam sat down in the chair next to the bed. "Hi, sweet Sarah," he said.

His wife, who appeared to have been sleeping, slowly opened her eyes and looked at him. To Sam, she appeared as she had back then, when the poison he'd been kindly providing to her had nearly completed its function. She was gaunt, her skin drawn across her face like a shrink-wrapped coconut with lumps. Her skin pale, her green eyes a dull gray, her auburn hair a bland shade of almost black. *So far she doesn't seem like the undead zombie I just conversed with back on Floor 7 ½. No, just a cancer-ridden, poison-saturated human being.*

"Sam, I don't think I have much time left before, well, you know, before I have to depart. I need to get something off my chest." *Yes, and what an ample chest it had been, back in the day,* thought Sam greedily. Sam leaned close to Sarah's mouth to hear her 'secret.' After the night he was having, Sam was prepared for almost anything.

"It's almost midnight, Sam. The witching hour, as they say, almost time. Do you finally remember the significance of midnight, Sam?"

Sam once again felt cold sweat break out on his arms, his pulse quicken, and his body start to vibrate.

"Yes, Sam, all your little projects, all your kills, all of them at midnight. Look at your watch, Sam."

Sam, feeling unsteady, glanced at his watch - 11:51 pm.

"Yes, the time is almost right, Sam. IT'S ALMOST RIGHT!"

With this last declaration, a thick glob of bloody phlegm flew out of her mouth and struck Sam's right cheek. Sarah's emaciated face began to peel away from the boney structure below. All Sam's startled mind could think was, *here we go again.* Thick, ropy strands of tissue and cartilage oozed onto the stained bed sheets. The medical monitors flat-lined and screamed a constant tone. Sarah's thin arms, flesh rapidly decaying and sloughing, reached out to him and gripped his right shoulder.

"IT'S ALMOST TIME! *YOUR TIME, SAM!*" the slimy creature in the filthy bed, no longer sweet Sarah, squawked at him in a rapidly deteriorating voice.

Sam wrenched himself away from its grasp, almost took a hard tumble as he slid on some kind of sticky substance, not quite blood, and bolted out the door. He made a quick left and hauled ass past the deserted desk. He thought for a moment that the Halloween decorations twisted and mutated as he rushed past. *Wouldn't surprise me,* Sam figured.

The elevator doors were in sight. They slowly opened as Sam approached, and he wasted no time in stepping inside the transportation medium that had been, for tonight, both his salvation and his damnation.

He heard music --

"I dreamed I walked in heaven, just the other night.
There was so much beauty -- so much light"

It sounded like John Fogerty again, but he didn't recognize it. *Must be new*, thought Sam as the elevator doors came together in closure, *the lyrics don't really fit this occasion though*.

Sam again checked his watch, now it was - 11:56 pm.

"God, if I could just get my fucking report and get out of here," he moaned to himself. He pressed the Lobby button again, but, as before, it was pointless. Sam stared ahead as the elevator began its ascent.

13 ... 14 ... 15 ... 16 ... 17 ... 18 ... 19

The elevator stopped, and Sam - sweating, shaking, breathing erratically - waited.

FlakeNoir

The doors part before him and the first thing Sam notices is the eerie quiet, not only in the space around him, but also inside his mind. He takes a deep and shaky breath, holds it for a moment before releasing it in a long sigh. After the night he has just had, this peace is surely welcome - and allows Sam to rethink some of the events since first stepping into this elevator prison all those long hours ago.

Alright, so I see where this might be a problem, apparently you can't go around-, he thinks. And his overwrought mind fills in, *-breaking little girls hearts*. He chuckles, and then completes his original thought, *can't go around committing murder without the 'Nasties' coming out of the woodwork to complain*. He sighs, genuinely regretful.

"This is all my stupid fault, really, had I not told Sarah my secret - that I had taken my own mothers' life - I just know she never would have suspected how deep the well went." Sam's gravelly voice echoes off the elevator walls surrounding him, giving himself a start, he looks to the left and sees the reflection of a man looking far older than his 52 years

"You look like shit," he tells his reflection. His reflection turns sideways away from him, and replies, "Fuck you," without too much brass.

Cautiously, he steps out of the elevator looking all about him. There is nothing here to be seen - nothing at all! On all sides, left, right and in front he is faced with pure white light. He checks behind to see the elevator doors remain open - the number 19 aglow above the entrance.

Sam moves as far to his left as he can before coming up against something solid. His hand moves slowly along the surface trying to find some sort of shape, anything at all to suggest where he might be. Squinting against the light, he traces his fingers along the surface until they come to a join, and realizes very quickly that it is simply a wall - so brilliantly white is the light, that he just could not see it. He drops to his knees, running his hand along the floor until it hits the join. Yes, he is now completely sure that he is standing in a corridor.

Behind him music unexpectedly erupts from the elevator, Sam recognizes an old and familiar Aerosmith tune. And thinks, *how appropriate*, his lips becoming a wry smile.

"It's the dawn of the day and I'm crashed and I'm smashed. As it is I'm feeling like my chips are all cashed, all of my clothes strewn all over the room. The crisis at hand is I'm all out of zoom."

Sam stumbles forward in an attempt to escape the elevator, hopefully for the last time. The muzak

behind him gains in pitch the further away he moves. *Why the hell do they always have to turn good tunes into such shit by using that damn canned music*, he wonders as he nears what appears to be a door.

"The tricks of the night keeping me in a daze, we'll open a bottle and I'll pull down the shades. Glance in the mirror back into bed. Forget that it's day, time to party again."

He reaches out a trembling hand to grasp the doorknob, knowing full well in his mind that this door will be locked. It is. "Shit," he curses. Behind him the music swells to a volume almost completely unbearable.

*"Bright Light Fright
Bright Light Fright
Bright Light Fright
Go, gimme the night."*

And as the word "night" screams down the corridor toward him, just like that, the white light is gone. Directly in front of 52-year-old Sam Jessup is his long sought after office door. He looks behind him toward the elevator, its doors still standing wide open, but, now along with the light, the music is also gone. He turns slowly, and sees that he is standing in the short hall leading to his office - several other office doors stand ajar, just as they would on any other night.

Sam, he says to himself, *you really ought to lay off the Jack Daniels*. He pulls his key ring from the left front pocket of his pants, grinning. *Southpaw - just like Ma*, his mind wanders. He sends the key homeward into the lock. With the door unlocked, he enters his office and quickly moves toward his desk.

He begins to feel more relaxed now, so doesn't immediately see the shape sitting, and slowly turning in a swivel chair. "Hello, Sam," the figure wearing a dark shroud says. Its hood is pulled up, partially covering the face.

Sam jumps violently and drops his keys, hot fluid runs down the inside of his thigh. "Who the hell are you?!" he screams. "I saw you earlier, didn't I? That was *you* in my frat' house, wasn't it?"

The covered head jiggles as the now laughing figure rises to his feet. He is holding a stack of papers out to Sam, beckoning him closer with an extended skeletal hand. "Here you go then Sam, isn't this what you were looking for? It's your report. Due in a matter of moments actually...tomorrow," the shrouded figure says looking toward the clock.

Sam also sees that it's 11:59 p.m. and he knows in his heart, that no amount of Jack Daniels could ever save him from nor place him into a state such as this one. He reaches out a hand to the dark, *and, let's face it Sammy-boy*, he thinks, *foul-smelling*, figure in front of him.

As he lifts back the hood, the room all around them dissolves with dizzying speed, leaving him feeling off-balance and unquestionably nauseous. He tries to steady himself and realizes they are both standing back inside the infernal elevator.

Sam looks directly into the eyes of his captor, his jaw drops into in a perfect O, and then he begins to cry. "Dad...you? But, I loved you, and missed you so much after the war... you must know that?!" His father merely places the report into Sam's trembling hands and says simply, "Read."

As Sam begins to read the first page of his deathly long report, the elevator begins its descent.

18...17...16...15

He sees his mother's death written on the page before him, it is clinical, there can be no mistaking. It is a factual report.

14...13...12...11

The elevator picks up speed, the gears and pulleys shrieking with the effort of keeping the car on track at such a velocity. Sam turns the pages of his report, trying valiantly to stay on his feet. He sees all of the old names right there on the pages before him, his kills, his trophies listed in the order that he had taken them down.

10...9...8...7

"You can thank your mother for the documentation, son, and your own lovely Sarah for passing on your secret. Did you really think you'd get away with all of this?" Sam remembers sharing his secret very well. It is the last time that he trusted, loved, with all of himself, back when he still had some hope of salvation. He had poured out his heart to her, telling of that very first night that he had killed. How the sheer anger had bubbled up and over after that terrible Halloween night of humiliation, the one Roach and Suzanne had stolen the last of his remaining self-esteem; this on top of being a child that is basically alone. A father that had left him for the war, and a mother that had tried to leave him through her ever increasing insanity. Yes, he remembers very well telling Sarah where it all began. Sam returns to the pages in front of him, the skeletal corpse that is his father looks on carefully, waiting for full understanding to come.

6...5...4...3

There is humor in his voice as his father tells him, "We simply can't let you carry on this lifestyle son, what kind of parents would that make us?"

Sam snorts back bitter laughter and spit flies from his blood-encrusted lips. "For Christ-sake dad, you and mom were the problem!" The sound coming from the elevator now mostly drowns out Sam, as he rails at his long dead father. The elevator car passes through the lobby, and on to the basement level.

2...1...L...B

As it hits the basement floor its moving at nearly 150 m.p.h. and Sam immediately regains all the weight that was lost to him during their freefall, and the force of it breaks every bone in his body; beginning at his toes, and moving upward through his skeleton in a rippling motion until his neck snaps with an audible *crack*. Sam's eyes bulge from their sockets, as his head topples from his neck and rolls to a stop along side of his Gucci knockoffs from Payless.

The elevator has stopped. Sam's body stops along with it, but his soul continues along its downward journey, he is bemused to see that he has the gift of sight even after death. He looks up at the shrouded figure of his father rapidly becoming smaller as each moment passes. It is joined now by the familiar shape of his mother, his sweet Sarah, and behind them; still more and more of his turgid past peer down at him from the top of the elevator shaft. Something wafts by him, on and upwards it goes. He sees it is his report - the pages pulling apart and flying free, scattering and rise up toward the white light at the top of the elevator shaft - and life.

From the light issues a strong drum beat intro' and he soon recognizes it as the sound of Chris Rea - he knows it is just for him...

"And all the roads jam up with credit, and there's nothing you can do.
It's all just bits of paper flying away from you.
Oh, look out world take a good look, what comes down here.
You must learn this lesson fast and learn it well.
This ain't no upwardly mobile freeway, Oh no, this is the road,
Said, this is the road, this is the road to hell."

Sam Jessup, age 52, begins to scream.