

The Alan
Wake
Files



The **Alan
Wake**
Files

Compiled by
Clay Steward

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To all those who walk in light

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Preface

The book you hold in your hands represents the end of one life and the beginning of another. My name is Clay Steward and I began on this path when a series of strange dreams turned out to be visions of a real man, a town in trouble, and a powerful, destructive force beyond my imagining.

Two years ago, if someone had asked me who Alan Wake was, or where the town of Bright Falls was located, I would have been stumped on both counts. My life had, up to that point, been untouched by either of these particulars, and perhaps for the better. But I cannot change the past, I can only try to make sense of it, and with the publication of this book, perhaps gain some measure of forgiveness from those I hurt along the way.

I will explain how I became involved in these events but if there is one thing I need you to understand, it's that the strange disturbances that shook Bright Falls in the weeks preceding the Deerfest of last year represent one of the greatest mysteries of our time. This book began as a personal attempt to understand and solve those mysteries. Now, I fear that may be impossible. I hope merely to exorcize them, and by doing so, to relinquish their claims upon me.

I lived a quiet life in Madison, Wisconsin, until the dreams started. Recurring dreams, all pointing me to a particular place.

My first dream was nothing at all. I'm alone in a cabin in the night.

.....
OPPOSITE: The lighthouse at Rain Cove Point near Bright Falls, just as it appeared in my recurring dreams.

Someone knocks and I step out onto the porch. There's no one there, but the lantern is broken in what I take to be a very meaningful way. That's how it strikes me. The second dream is the same as the first, except that after I find the broken lamp, I hear something in the forest, and I think I see movement. I follow it to the forest's edge, but then it stops. The third dream follows the course of dreams one and two, except the sounds get louder and louder. Trees fall and it's as though I am caught in a storm.

I run away and down the road till I get to the ocean. There's a lighthouse and it's obvious to my dream logic that I will be safe there. A man holds the lighthouse door open and frantically waves me toward him. I run and run, chased by this thing, this dark omnipresence, and in the last possible moment I'm consumed. I cease to exist.

Soon I'm having these dreams every night and it's the same each time. I'm chased by this dark monster or men consumed by shadows, and again and again I see this man in his early thirties with the strong but friendly face. Sometimes I save his life, other times he saves mine. But we always die in the end. I start staying up later and later, trying to avoid sleep. My wife and my little boy are safe in their beds and I'm up at 3 AM watching the tube, surfing through a wasteland of softcore soap and slaughter, trying to stay awake.

But you can't stay awake forever. Late one night I'm watching reruns of that old show *Night Springs*, but I keep nodding off. In the twilight between dreaming and waking, I hear the voice of the man from my dreams. He is talking to me, saying: "I'm not interested in literary cliques or in questions of genre versus literary fiction. I want a good story, well told, and I'll take it where I can get it." My eyes flitter open and there he is — the nameless man from my dreams. He is on my freaking television set, being interviewed at a round wooden table with two other men. I almost leap from the couch and

I am more awake than I have ever been in my life. I watch and watch till another question is directed at this man and the caption appears: "Alan Wake, author of *The Sudden Stop*."

It's entirely possible, even likely, that considering Wake's fame, I had seen his picture before and performed some unconscious Copy/Paste work, but I knew things about him from my visions, things that I hadn't read. In the days following my discovery, I obsessively researched his writings, read everything I could get my hands on, and it only confirmed that he was the same man with whom I'd been trapped in my nightly hellscape. His detective, Alex Casey, resembled him and they shared the same grim humor, even when death felt certain.

I was convinced that my dreams represented a shared experience with Alan Wake. More than that — they were a warning. I wrote a long and impassioned letter to Mr. Wake's publishers but only received a post card noting my letter's receipt and encouraging me to purchase Wake's latest book.

Every time I reentered the dream world I became an obsessive observer of this strange dimension, which seemed to be an underwater world populated by unknowable, dark forces whose only desire was to destroy me. I was a diligent transcriber of these awful visions, and every time I woke I updated the dream journal I had started.

My wife Anna and I hardly spoke anymore and I felt myself becoming increasingly disengaged from my former life. The journal was the one thing that helped me make sense of what I was experiencing. The dreams continued, becoming more and more horrific over the following months. Only one thing was clear: Alan Wake was somehow at the center of what I was experiencing. In fact, he was the *cause* of everything I was experiencing. Each night, I was killed, or I witnessed others killed. Finally, I saw a small town destroyed and a whole world

consumed by darkness. And it was all his fault! I didn't blame him for it, but I had to make contact with him, to tell him what I'd seen, to warn him.

While researching lighthouses at the university library, I happened upon an image of the lighthouse from my dreams. This hit me like a thunderclap. It was located outside a town called Bright Falls. An Internet image search revealed a scrapbook of my visions. Here it was, this small, picturesque town in Washington State. Fishing, logging, bad weather. The buildings, streets, and bridges were those from my nightmares. I had seen it all before.

I couldn't deny it anymore and my decision was made for me. I bought a \$165 ticket on a Greyhound bus and arrived in Bright Falls two days later. I'll admit that things didn't feel right from the beginning. I've lived in enough midwestern shitburgs to know what economic blight looks like up close and this wasn't that. Something had happened here. There were bullet holes in buildings and a general air of civil disturbance. There was talk of tornados and a troubling number of women dressed in mourning clothes.

There were three funerals the first day, all held for local fathers and husbands and wives, all held in absentia. When I asked people what had happened here, some mentioned freak storms and an annual town party that was preceded by horrible accidents. Most would not reply at all. They shook their heads and walked away, that stricken look of survivor guilt crimping their faces. They avoided my questions as though I was probing into some town shame, some Big Secret no one dared reveal. I know how strange that sounds, but it felt as though the whole town was being held hostage. Like they'd been told they were being watched and if they spoke to anyone, there would be more deaths, and more after that.

I checked into Room #2 at the Majestic Motel. It smelled of stale alcohol and cigarettes, with a fair dose of what I now recognized as

fear-sweat. I had no idea how long I would spend here, but I unpacked my bags — all except for my dream journal. I took my pocket knife from my backpack and drew out the Phillips head, climbed up to the air vent and unscrewed the panel thinking myself very clever even though I'd seen this trick in a couple movies.

Well, I guess someone else had too because it was there that I found the green cardboard box. I pulled it out and opened it up on the bed: a cache of documents some three thick manila folders thick. When I saw the name of its author, I understood that this was the end of another's journey: Special Agent Robert Nightingale of the FBI. My months of pain, my disintegrating marriage, my confusion all washed through me. This is what the dreams had pointed me to, this room in Bright Falls, Washington.

There are some who will question the authenticity of my find and consider it an elaborate hoax, or the product of a broken mind, but I am not deterred. The longer I spent with Nightingale's dossier, the more I became convinced that I had found a fellow traveler. He may have been a drunk, insane with grief or a kind of madness that has no name, but he was onto something, as my own subsequent investigation has proven.

Alan Wake had just been to Bright Falls.

His wife Alice had disappeared.

A series of chaotic and unexplained events leading to missing and dead persons, the destruction of buildings, reports of shadow men and monsters, followed soon after. I had arrived at the edge of a great and foreboding secret.

I set out from the Majestic the next day to search out the truth for myself.

— Clay Steward



Nightingale's Field Notes

The handwritten notes found among Agent Nightingale's effects form perhaps the most telling document in the collection about his internal struggle as he pursued Alan Wake. The mixture of driving forces creates a maelstrom of turbulence inside a man, not unlike Wake, trying to hold himself together while pursuing a quixotic goal.

The notes are presented here in facsimile form to give readers the same sense of physical texture I found when I discovered them. Here Nightingale inadvertently exposes his tortured ambivalence alongside his dogged determination. These ghosts from his past battle with the demons he meets in his present. As for his future, there seems to be nothing brighter than doubt.

It is unclear whether this cache represents the entirety of the notes he took, or simply a portion. They do, however, suggest that Nightingale was at the breaking point, both physically and mentally. Whether the abrupt end of his field notes was the result of sheer exhaustion on the agent's part, or another, more nefarious explanation, I am unable to determine.

.....
OPPOSITE: The cheery sign that welcomed Alan Wake, Agent Nightingale, and myself to Bright Falls.

DAY ONE (NIGHT)

EXHAUSTED. MISSED THE TURN OFF. TOOK 2 HOURS LONGER THAN PLANNED. TREES ARE PRETTY, BUT HELL, THEY ALL LOOK ALIKE. THIS PLACE REALLY IS IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE. AND NOT THE EXACT MIDDLE. THAT WOULD BE TOO EASY.

SUN'S ALREADY DOWN. MOTEL STINKS, AND NOT EVEN IN A GOOD, CHICAGO WAY. MAJESTIC MY ASS.

GOT TO CHECK IN WITH THE LOCAL JOHNNY LAW IN THE MORNING.

HAVEN'T REALLY GRILLED THE LOCAL YOKELS YET. DON'T THINK THE MORON AT THE FRONT DESK COUNTS.

WISH I HAD THE BUREAU'S BACKING. SOME OFFICIAL RESOURCES WOULD HELP. BUT THEN THERE'D BE A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO. AND I'VE GOT NO BETTER WAY TO BURN MY FREE TIME.

STILL HAVE A FEW FAVORS I CAN CALL IN IF I NEED SOME HEAVY LIFTING.

BETTER THIS WAY.



DAY TWO

JOHNNY LAW TURNS OUT TO BE JANIE LAW. SHERIFF BREAKER. COMES FROM COP FAMILY. KNOWS DIDDLEYSQUAT. USUAL HOSTILITY TO FEDS. DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO USE HONEY OR SALT ON THIS ONE. DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE ENOUGH HONEY IN ME.

SHE DID MAKE THE PHONE CALL I NEEDED. LET'S CONSIDER HER PLIABLE.

DINER'S A GREAT PLACE TO GET ALL FRIENDLY WITH THE TOWNIES. THEY HAD A CARDBOARD CUTOUT OF WAKE PROPPED UP NEAR THE DOOR. ONE OF THE WAITRESSES IS SUPPOSED TO BE A BIG FAN.



When I talked to Sheriff Breaker later, she revealed a different point of view than the one Agent Nightingale expresses here. She believed their relationship was cordial and cooperative. The “hostility” he speaks of here may well reveal more about the agent’s predisposition than any actual exchange between the two law enforcement officers. Breaker would not comment on the nature of the call she was asked to make, and when I asked her about Agent Nightingale’s current whereabouts she turned around and wished me luck, our interview at an end.

.....
 ABOVE: Sheriff Breaker, not pleased to see Agent Nightingale’s camera.

DAY TWO (AFTERNOON)

HOW TO GET TO OUR BOY BEFORE HE HURTS ANYONE. THAT'S THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION.

DO THESE PEOPLE KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DEALING WITH HERE? GOOD GOD, IT'S LIKE WATCHING TODDLERS PLAY WITH NITRO.

INTERVIEWED LOCALS AT TRAILER PARK. SUSPECT THERE'S SOMETHING BEHIND ALL THESE DOPEY COUNTRY FACADES. EVERYBODY KNOWS MORE THAN THEY'RE TELLING. OR MAYBE THEY JUST DON'T. WHICH IS EVEN SCARIER. WAKE DID A NUMBER ON THAT WAITRESS. SWEET KID, BUT CAN'T TELL NIGHT FROM DAY.



When Nightingale refers to “our boy,” it can only be assumed he means Alan Wake. What is not clear is why Nightingale is so afraid of what Wake might do. Although Wake has a history of erratic behavior, he is not associated with anything that would give an experienced FBI agent concern. Nightingale seems equally unnerved and suspicious of the locals, and more than that, he evidences a genuine fear of an undetermined someone, or some *thing*.

.....
ABOVE: Based on the license plates, this car had been rented by Alice Wake. It's unknown whether Nightingale's examination of the crash site yielded any leads to her whereabouts, or those of her husband.

DAY THREE

NOISES LAST NIGHT. SOME DAMN ANIMALS. WENT OUT AGAIN, GOT LOST AGAIN. GODDAMN TREES.

CAN'T BELIEVE HOW SLIPPERY SOME GLYS ARE.

TALKED TO THE FRONT DESK MORON THIS MORNING. DIDN'T SEEM TO KNOW ZIP ABOUT WAKE. GOT REAL QUIET WHEN I MENTIONED HIM, IN FACT. COULD BE HE JUST RAN OUT OF THOUGHTS.

I'M GETTING NOTHING OUT OF THESE PEOPLE.



Nightingale's commentary on his encounters with the motel staff reveal both his growing frustration with the pace of his investigation and his distrust of the locals. His reports of strange noises in the night, his confession to getting lost again only serve to highlight his vulnerability as he tries to navigate the unfamiliar terrain. Bright Falls represents a dangerous landscape to Nightingale and perhaps to any others who cross its boundary.

.....
 ABOVE: Nightingale's photo of Stucky's gas station, which he would have seen upon his arrival to Bright Falls. It appears to have been abandoned.

DAY THREE (NIGHT)

SCANNER PICKED UP CONFUSED
DISTRESS CALL RESPONSE.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, OR BURGLARY,
OR VANDALISM, OR KIDNAPPING.

DEPUTY DAWG CAN'T DECIDE.
LITTLE JANIE LAW'S GOT HER
HANDS FULL.

THINGS HERE ARE JUST STRANGE
ENOUGH THAT I'M SURE I'M ON
THE RIGHT TRACK.

FOUND WAKE'S AGENT, FOLLOWED
HIM A BIT. TUBBY TRIED TO LOSE
ME. MAYBE WAKE'S SO SLIPPERY
BECAUSE HIS BUDDY'S SO SLIMY.



It is difficult to break through Nightingale's tough law enforcement facade at times, even when he's writing his inner thoughts, but reading between the lines may be illuminative. While Nightingale's entry regarding the scanner audio may be nothing more than a small-town deputy handling routine crime calls, why would he bother noting them? Given his state of mind in the earlier entries, it seems more likely that Nightingale found the garbled distress calls suggestive of paranormal activity.

.....
ABOVE: The streets of Bright Falls in the days before Deerfest.

DAY THREE, PRACTICALLY FOUR

CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS. DAYLIGHT IS HARSH WHEN THERE'S NO SLEEP.

SAW LADY DIOGENES WITH HER LAMP IN BROAD DAYLIGHT. I FORGET HER REAL NAME. GOT IT WRITTEN SOMEWHERE.

HOW TO GET TO WAKE. IS SOMEONE HIDING HIM? EXTREMISM IN THE CAUSE OF SANITY IS NO VICE. WHATEVER IT TAKES.

LOCAL HEAD SHRINKER'S NAME KEEPS COMING UP: HARTMAN.



Nightingale's reference to "Lady Diogenes" refers to the Greek philosopher who walked around ancient Athens with a lamp during the day for the stated purpose of "looking for an honest man." Clearly, he was referring to Cynthia Weaver, a well-known town eccentric who may have been more prescient about the dangers of darkness than anyone could have predicted. Also of note is the mention of Dr. Emil Hartman, who has been unresponsive to my interview requests. Later notes clearly show Nightingale to be suspicious of Hartman's practice at the Cauldron Lake Lodge.

.....
 ABOVE: Local resident Cynthia Weaver and her ever-present lamp.

DAY FOUR

DIDN'T SLEEP A WINK. SCANNER
JUST GOT WEIRDER THROUGH
THE NIGHT.

WAKE IS ONE ELLSIVE BUGGER.
IS HE THE ONLY ONE? IS IT HIM
HOLDING UP THE WHOLE HOUSE OF
CARDS? WHAT'LL HAPPEN WHEN
I PULL?

WISH I COULD BE SURE. BUT NOT
TO DECIDE IS TO DECIDE. HAVE TO
DO WHAT'S NECESSARY WHEN THE
TIME COMES.

FEELS LIKE I'M ALONE IN THE
WILDERNESS HERE.



Nightingale's impatience toward the end of these notes is palpable. This is the first instance where he questions Wake's status as a solitary force. Manifold questions remain, such as why he believed Wake to be such a source of danger. Had Nightingale been drawn to Bright Falls, as I was, by a series of dreams and nightmares? I'm compelled to think he was acting on harder evidence than was available to me. Could this be the "ongoing investigation" referred to in my FOIA request (see p.123)?

.....
 ABOVE: The desolate landscape surrounding Bright Falls seems pushed up out of the heart of the earth, rejected by the planet itself.

DAY FOUR, AFTERNOON

A PARTNER ISN'T LIKE A CO-WORKER, OR A FRIEND, OR EVEN A BROTHER. HE'S YOUR GUARDIAN, YOUR KEEPER, YOUR OTHER WIFE. HE KEEPS YOU ON THE DEAD STRAIGHT, CALLS YOU ON EVERYTHING THE OTHERS LET SLIDE, AND HE HAS YOUR BACK WHEN THE SHOOTING STARTS.

THAT'S WHERE I FAILED FINN. I OWE IT TO HIM TO KEEP GOING EVEN WHEN EVERYTHING'S GONE DARK. WHEN THE CRAZINESS BACK EAST STARTED, HE COULDN'T EXPLAIN IT EITHER. THAT'S WHEN HE NEEDED ME MOST. BUT I BLEW IT.

I HAVE TO MAKE IT RIGHT.



This is a rarity: one of the few instances where Nightingale reveals his heart, and consequently, some objective information about his motivations. That he lost a partner in the line of duty has been confirmed by my investigation, but the circumstances around that loss remain murky indeed. Clearly, he holds himself responsible in some fundamental way. Had Nightingale witnessed similar events before? How did these experiences transform him? Again, all we have is supposition and conjecture.

.....
 ABOVE: Despite hours of scrutiny, I have been unable to determine why Agent Nightingale chose to record this sombre moment.

DAY FOUR, NIGHT

HARTMAN SEEMS TO BE THE BIG MAN ON CAMPUS. VERY PROTECTIVE OF HIS PATIENTS.

SKIMMED THROUGH HIS SELF-HELP BOOK - WHAT A LOAD. HE'S GOT A SWEET LITTLE RACKET GOING AT THE "LODGE". GHT TELLS ME HE'S INVOLVED IN ALL THIS SOMEHOW.

GOING FOR A DRIVE. CAN'T THINK IN HERE. AM I GOING DOWN LIKE FINN?

NOT IF I SHOOT FIRST.

NIGHT. MUCH LATER.

SOUNDS ARE GETTING WEIRDER ALL THE TIME. SOMETHING HAPPENING JUST OUT OF TOWN, OUT BY SOME FARM. FLASHES OF LIGHT, TOO. COULD BE KIDS WITH FIRECRACKERS, GETTING EDGY AND STARTING A BARN FIRE.

PROBABLY OUGHT TO GET SOME BATTERIES FOR THIS STUPID FLASHLIGHT IF THERE'S TIME.

WILL I HAVE IT IN ME TO DO WHAT'S NECESSARY WHEN THE TIME COMES?



Interviews

The following interviews with various citizens of Bright Falls were conducted by Agent Nightingale over the course of three or four days. Nightingale recorded each of them on microcassette and I have transcribed them myself. It has been a painstaking process, as the sound quality on some of them is very poor.

Some of the interviews were more successful than others, yet all show a reticence to speak about the town. All are included here, however, to form a more complete picture of characters and events. Most of them present Agent Nightingale in a very poor light and I admit I considered leaving these out altogether. I have a great deal of respect for him and believe they don't paint a complete picture of this deeply conflicted man. In the interests of honesty, I decided to include each one of them. I implore the reader to bear in mind that this is a man under tremendous pressure.

I believe that, taken as a whole, these interviews reveal something of the tapestry of the town. And that tapestry cannot help but have an impact on the writer who was caught up in it, for better or worse.

.....
OPPOSITE: This picture was obtained from nine-year-old Owen Kittle, an avid photographer and civil law enforcement enthusiast.



Unknown Subject

It's unclear who the subject of this brief interview is. Agent Nightingale himself didn't appear to know; accompanying notes indicate that he ran into the man in the Elderwood National Park while trying to find Alan Wake, but the circumstances are unclear. The interview was conducted outdoors, and judging by the sound quality and the tone of the interview it's likely Nightingale surreptitiously turned his tape recorder on without the man's knowledge.

.....
 ABOVE: Although the identity of the interview subject remains uncertain, townsfolk to whom I've shown this photograph insist that it was a local troublemaker known as "Mott."

NIGHTINGALE: —been in a fight? What happened?

UNKNOWN SUBJECT: It's nothing.

NIGHTINGALE: You seen anything weird here? How about this guy, Alan Wake? He's not in his cabin. You know where he is? Have you seen him? (The man laughs.) Is that funny to you?

UNKNOWN SUBJECT: You should leave this whole thing alone. You don't know what you're messing with.

NIGHTINGALE: Is that right? And you do, huh? What's your name?

UNKNOWN SUBJECT: What's it to you?

NIGHTINGALE: You see this badge, buddy? I ask the questions.

UNKNOWN SUBJECT: Government, huh. You gonna put me in the system, government man? Huh? Well, a new system's on its way. What do you think about that?

NIGHTINGALE: I think we're gonna talk about this down at the station. (A pause.) You deaf? Let's go, buddy.

UNKNOWN SUBJECT: If I still had my gun...

NIGHTINGALE: What the hell did you say to me? (Sounds of a scuffle. Nightingale grunts loudly. Running footsteps recede.)

NIGHTINGALE: Get back here, you asshole! You're under arrest! (A pause. Nightingale breathes heavily.) Goddammit! Goddammit!

(Recording ends.)



Paul Randolph

Paul Randolph is the manager of the Sparkling River Estates trailer park, where some kind of an incident involving the police and Alan Wake took place. This sequence demonstrates Agent Nightingale's interview skills and professionalism, as he manages to coax an obviously reluctant witness into cooperating with him. I can't help thinking that this is an echo of the man before the loss of his partner and the events that led to it.

.....
 ABOVE: Paul Randolph avoiding eye contact as he stands in front of Rose Marigold's trailer.

NIGHTINGALE: Interviewing Mr. Paul Randolph, manager of the Sparkling River Estates trailer park.

RANDOLPH: I'm not sure I wanna talk to you.

NIGHTINGALE: Yeah, I've been getting a lot of that around here. Tough luck, we need to sort this out.

RANDOLPH: You coulda hit me.

NIGHTINGALE: Sir, I'm a highly trained federal agent. You were in no danger.

RANDOLPH: Yeah, but someone said you were drunk.

NIGHTINGALE: Who said that? (A pause.) Do I seem drunk to you? Huh? (A pause.)

RANDOLPH: I... I guess not.

NIGHTINGALE: These goddamn people. (A pause.) Okay, look, sir, I know you had a scare, and I'm sorry about that. I mean, you're the one who called the police. I know you're the good guy here. It's just that the man I'm after is real bad news. I had to take the shot, you know? I know you were just concerned for the girl. Rose, right?

RANDOLPH: Yes, sir.

NIGHTINGALE: Well, you know she's not doing too good right now, and if we're going to help her we're going to need all the information you can give us. Okay?

RANDOLPH: Yeah, I guess. Well... those guys were in Rose's trailer for a long time, and I thought, wait a minute, Rose isn't

that kind of a girl, what's that about? Because, you know, I've been in this business a long time, and some girls, they, uh...

NIGHTINGALE: Do a little business of their own?

RANDOLPH: Yeah. And I don't put up with that, you know, I tell 'em to move on. I'm no prude, but I don't want that in my place. But I knew Rose wasn't up to nothing like that, so it was weird, these guys staying in her trailer like that.

NIGHTINGALE: And those guys were...

RANDOLPH: Yeah, Wake and the loudmouth in the puffy jacket. I don't know that guy, but I recognized Wake right away, 'cause Rose is always going on about him. She gave me a couple of his books to read. He's pretty good. But I read the papers too, you know, so I know he gets in trouble a lot. Anyway, they were in there the whole goddamn day! Nobody even came out for a smoke or nothing, 'cause I was working outside the whole time and I would've seen them.

NIGHTINGALE: You hear anything? Talking, arguing, any noises at all?

RANDOLPH: No, sir, I wasn't that close. I mean, the way these trailers are built, I'm sure I would've heard if there was any shouting or something, sure. But there wasn't nothing. And I knew she'd skipped work today, too, so I got worried. I mean, it's not my business what people do in their own homes, but I know Rose pretty well, and I got to thinking that maybe she's in trouble. And the way you guys showed up, I guess I was right, huh?

NIGHTINGALE: Uh-huh, go on.

RANDOLPH: Well, I just got a real bad feeling about the whole thing. You know? Like a hunch, like something nasty was going down at her trailer, and, uh...

NIGHTINGALE: Okay.

RANDOLPH: So I called the Sheriff.

NIGHTINGALE: Well, you did the right thing, sir.

(Recording ends.)



Rose Marigold

Ms. Marigold appears to have great difficulty focusing on the topic at hand, and it is only with persistence that Agent Nightingale manages to reach her. It's unclear what happened to her, and the identity of the woman she refers to remains unknown. I do find it touching that even though Nightingale appears to be unrelenting and brusque in his interactions with people, he's clearly affected by Ms. Marigold's distress. He genuinely feels her pain, and for a brief moment, he seems to put away his obsession with his case.

.....
 ABOVE: The blank stare of Rose Marigold in her trailer, following an obviously traumatic event. Her repeated references to "that lady" and "the woman in black" indicate that Wake was not the perpetrator.

NIGHTINGALE: Following is an interview with Rose Marigold, 21, an employee of the Oh Deer Diner in Bright Falls. (A pause. Raises voice.) Rose. Rose. Rose!

MARIGOLD: Okay.

NIGHTINGALE: My name is Nightingale. I'm a federal agent, and I need to ask you some questions.

MARIGOLD: Okay.

NIGHTINGALE: I hear you were seeing Rusty, is that right? The park ranger?

MARIGOLD: I like...I like Rusty. He never shouts at me. I give him free coffee at the diner. Don't tell anyone. Or...I think maybe they know. Everybody likes Rusty.

NIGHTINGALE: Something happened at Elderwood. We can't find Rusty. Do you know anything about him?

MARIGOLD: Rusty...

(There's a pause.)

NIGHTINGALE: Hey, missy, I'm losing patience here. I need some goddamn answers.

MARIGOLD: Is it...is it day or night? Why is it dark in here?

NIGHTINGALE: Rose, this is really important. I need to ask you about Alan Wake.

MARIGOLD: I'm his biggest fan.

NIGHTINGALE: Yeah, I heard. He was at Elderwood, too. You

know anything about what happened there? Why was he at your place?

MARIGOLD: His new book's going to be the best possible rollercoaster ride.

NIGHTINGALE: Uh-huh. What did he want with you? What happened?

(Marigold whimpers.)

MARIGOLD: Am I awake? Is this a dream?

NIGHTINGALE: You're awake! Just answer my goddamn questions!

MARIGOLD: I can't – who was that lady? Oh, God, she made me do it.

NIGHTINGALE: What lady? What did you do? Did Wake hurt you?

MARIGOLD: No! He wouldn't. I hurt him, didn't I? I betrayed him. I lied to him. I didn't want to! It was like it wasn't me. I kept screaming and my mouth wouldn't move! I still can't see right. It wasn't supposed to be like that, he was supposed to – she twisted it!

NIGHTINGALE: Who? Do you mean his wife? Alice Wake? Was she there?

MARIGOLD: The woman in black! It was about his manuscript! He wanted it back. I was just...we were supposed to talk about it. Discuss it. A literary discussion. With me!

NIGHTINGALE: Are you screwing him?

MARIGOLD: No! No, why would you...and he's married! He wouldn't do that! He's not like that!

NIGHTINGALE: So what were you up to in your trailer?

(Marigold breaks down and starts to cry.)

MARIGOLD: I'm not a bad person! I didn't want to hurt him!

(Marigold's crying becomes more and more hysterical. She can barely speak.)

MARIGOLD: Oh, please, this isn't a dream, is it? I can't tell anymore! What's wrong with the world? Everything looks wrong now and the light hurts my eyes! Everything looks wrong! It's all wrong!

(There's a long silence. Marigold continues to cry.)

NIGHTINGALE: Okay. Hey, easy. I'm sorry, okay, Rose? Shh. It's okay. C'mon, please stop crying. I won't ask you any more questions.

(Marigold continues to cry. Agent Nightingale apparently moves to comfort her.)

NIGHTINGALE: It's okay, honey. I'm sorry, huh? Everything's okay now. Shh.

(Recording ends.)



Barry Wheeler

It's unclear why Wake's agent, Barry Wheeler, is being interviewed, but clearly this is somehow connected with the events at the trailer park. I've tried to contact Wheeler several times, but he refuses to talk to me. After certain legal proceedings I decided to abandon all of my attempts on that front.

.....
 ABOVE: An argumentative Barry Wheeler resists divulging any secrets about Alan Wake.

NIGHTINGALE: Talking to Barry Wheeler, a literary agent.

WHEELER: What's that?

NIGHTINGALE: I'm recording this. I told you. How you feeling, Wheeler?

WHEELER: How do you think I'm feeling? I feel like shit. Did you arrest Rose?

NIGHTINGALE: That's an ongoing investigation. Can't discuss it with you. You just worry about yourself here, Wheeler.

WHEELER: Why? Am I under arrest?

NIGHTINGALE: Not yet. Let's see if you can keep it that way. I've got some questions about Wake. You're his friend, right?

WHEELER: And his agent. We go back, yeah. Good guy.

NIGHTINGALE: So you know where he is.

WHEELER: How would I know where he is?

NIGHTINGALE: You just said you're his friend.

WHEELER: And agent. And I don't know where he is.

NIGHTINGALE: You don't. What about his wife?

(There's a pause.)

WHEELER: You mean Alice?

NIGHTINGALE: Yeah. What, does he have other wives?

WHEELER: No, I was just...well, you know, she's missing.

NIGHTINGALE: I know she's missing. You're friends with the Wakes, aren't you?

WHEELER: Sure, I told you. Al's an old friend.

NIGHTINGALE: But not her?

WHEELER: What? No! She's a friend! Look, we don't see eye to eye on some things. That's all.

NIGHTINGALE: You sure you don't know anything? I mean, this whole thing, the way you're acting now, I start to get ideas. For example? Say there's a marital problem. Maybe she stepped out on him. Wake found out, took it out on her. You're covering up for your meal ticket.

WHEELER: What?

NIGHTINGALE: Hey, happens all the time. I mean, I know you're not the other man, right? I can't see a woman like that going for you.

WHEELER: Hey I get plenty, buddy! Look what's wrong with you? I got some bad coffee from Rose and passed out. Suddenly you're in my face with this crazy shit? Listen, I'm the injured party here! I'm the victim!

NIGHTINGALE: I don't care about any of that. I just want—

WHEELER: You don't care? What, is this below your pay grade, Mr. FBI? Well, my lawyer'll make you care, pal!

NIGHTINGALE: Goddammit, just tell me where Wake is!

WHEELER: Am I psychic? Do I have a map in my pocket with

a big "X" on it? Does he post status updates? Hell, by now I wouldn't tell you if I did know, because I think you're batshit crazy. Believe me, I know crazy when I see it.

NIGHTINGALE: Listen, doughboy, how would you like to be charged with obstruction of justice?

(Wheeler sputters.)

WHEELER: Oh, it's on now, man: it's lawyer time! I want my phone call! You haven't read me my rights!

NIGHTINGALE: You're not even under arrest!

WHEELER: Oh. Well, you're still a jerk. Uh, you're not arresting me?

(There's a brief pause.)

NIGHTINGALE: No.

WHEELER: Well, then I'm outta here. Jerk.

(Wheeler gets up and slams the door. Recording ends.)



Pat Maine

Local disk jockey and radio personality Pat Maine was obviously resentful of Nightingale, though it isn't quite clear why. Unfortunately, his reaction was somewhat typical: very few Bright Falls citizens, if any, seemed to respect Nightingale much. It's notable that the interview takes a strange turn at the end; obviously, both Nightingale and Maine knew much more than they're saying, but neither party was willing to commit to saying it out loud.

.....
 ABOVE: Pat Maine, at the offices of KBF radio.

NIGHTINGALE: I'm interviewing Pat Maine, the local radio host. Thanks for coming in, Mr. Maine.

MAINE: Against my better judgment. You realize that the only reason I'm talking to you at all is because Sarah asked me to?

NIGHTINGALE: Yeah, I'm very touched by your—

MAINE: Agent, I'm not going to take any abuse from you. Not after our last encounter.

NIGHTINGALE: Listen, that was all a misunderstanding.

MAINE: No, it wasn't. No. It was reckless, dangerous, and stupid, and you were in no condition to be working.

NIGHTINGALE: Look, I'm...can we just concentrate on this interview, get it over with? Please, sit down.

(A brief pause.)

NIGHTINGALE: Please.

MAINE: All right. What do you want to know?

NIGHTINGALE: What did Wake want with you?

MAINE: I have no idea. We really didn't have any time to talk. I thought he dropped in for an interview. We met on the ferry when he and his wife were coming to town, and he wasn't interested in one then. I said he should look me up if he changed his mind. It would've been a bit of a catch, especially with the Deerfest coming up. A celebrity would attract people outside the immediate area.

NIGHTINGALE: That's not why he was there.

MAINE: He said that. He couldn't say what he wanted before we were interrupted. If I hadn't said he was at the studio on the air, things would probably have gone differently.

NIGHTINGALE: Trust me, you got lucky. Wake's trouble.

MAINE: Really. I think I'm a fair judge of character, Agent Nightingale, and that's not the impression I got.

NIGHTINGALE: Suit yourself.

MAINE: I did wonder if he had anything to do with the situation at the trailer park, but it seemed so unlikely. I suppose I was wrong about that. Even so, I really can't imagine that anything Mr. Wake has done could be worth all this effort.

NIGHTINGALE: You probably can't. Me, I don't have to imagine.

MAINE: That sounds ominous.

NIGHTINGALE: It is ominous, Mr. Maine, trust me on that. It's no joke. I've seen things you wouldn't believe.

MAINE: You should consider the possibility that your experience doesn't make you an expert, or improve your judgment. It may not make you as unique as you think.

(There's a pause.)

NIGHTINGALE: What do...are you telling me that you know what Wake is up to? Is that it?

MAINE: I don't know anything about Mr. Wake. Perhaps if you were to tell me what he has done...

NIGHTINGALE: That relates to an ongoing investigation. I can't discuss it with you.

MAINE: Or the sheriff, or anyone else, it appears.

NIGHTINGALE: You're friendly with the sheriff, huh?

MAINE: This is a small community. Agent Nightingale, it's obvious that you have no idea what you're doing. I'm not trying to offend you. I'm just trying to tell you something important.

(A short pause.)

NIGHTINGALE: Please, Maine. You know something. I...I need you to tell me. I need help here.

MAINE: Frankly, I'm not prepared to discuss that with you. I'm sorry, Agent Nightingale, but I don't trust you.

NIGHTINGALE: But you trust Wake, is that it?

MAINE: I really don't know him at all. But he seems to be less of a loose cannon than you are.

(A pause.)

MAINE: Get out of here. Just get the hell out.

(Recording ends.)



Dr. Emil Hartman

This is the last of Agent Nightingale’s taped interviews, apparently recorded outside the gates of Dr. Hartman’s Cauldron Lake Lodge. I had a hard time making out Hartman’s words, which came from a speaker. Again, Nightingale recorded this without the interviewee’s knowledge, as the recording begins in midconversation. Unlike in the other interviews, Agent Nightingale now sounds undeniably drunk, and his poor conduct here speaks volumes about the immense pressure he must have felt.

.....
 ABOVE: This photo of Dr. Emil Hartman was used on the book jacket of *The Creator’s Dilemma*. While he is dressed casually, note his rigid posture.

HARTMAN: —don’t think that can be arranged right now. I’m afraid we’re a little understaffed today, so I’m very busy. You really should make an appointment.

NIGHTINGALE: I have reason to believe there’s a fugitive from justice on your premises.

HARTMAN: That’s utterly ridiculous. Agent, you’re not coming in.

NIGHTINGALE: Listen, Hartman, you’d better cooperate here. I’m a federal agent.

HARTMAN: I’m well aware of that. Your reputation reached me long before you did.

NIGHTINGALE: What’s that supposed to mean?

HARTMAN: It means, Agent Nightingale, that you have demonstrated an unfortunate tendency to wave your gun around and go about your duties under the influence of alcohol. Did you really think no one would notice?

NIGHTINGALE: You son of a bitch.

HARTMAN: Agent, I deal with substance abusers daily. You’re a classic addict – unable to get through the day without drinking, yet living in obvious denial of your condition. You should seek help.

NIGHTINGALE: Go to hell!

HARTMAN: What’s your crutch, agent? A discreet hip flask, perhaps? Do you tell yourself it’s nothing? Here’s an illuminating little experiment: does the thought of pouring it all out on the

ground make you a little panicky? What a cliché...

NIGHTINGALE: Shut. Up.

HARTMAN: As you wish. Good day.

(There's a very long pause. Agent Nightingale breathes heavily and apparently attempts to collect himself. Then he sounds the buzzer repeatedly.)

HARTMAN: Agent, this is completely unacceptable. I realize that your time isn't spent on anything constructive, but I have patients that need my help – patients that are actually willing to work through their problems.

NIGHTINGALE: We're not done yet, Hartman. I don't give a rat's ass about your patients. Is Alan Wake in there?

HARTMAN: No. I told you that already. Why do you persist with this line of inquiry?

NIGHTINGALE: I'm not buying that. I was tailing Wheeler, and this is the only place he could've gone. That means Wake is probably here too.

HARTMAN: Agent Nightingale, this is private property, and I will not allow you to disturb my patients.

NIGHTINGALE: Yeah? I can get a warrant. How would your fragile little patients like that?

(Hartman laughs.)

HARTMAN: Oh, I'm thoroughly intimidated by your mighty authority now, agent.

NIGHTINGALE: Listen, you smug snob, how would you like it if I busted through this gate and knocked you around a little?

HARTMAN: Agent Nightingale, first of all, I'm recording this conversation, so you might want to watch what you say. Secondly, you're not dealing with a hick now. I know the law, and if you can get a judge to grant a warrant, I'll be glad to cooperate – but you won't get one. Be advised that any further communications with me are to be made through my lawyer.

NIGHTINGALE: I don't believe this...

HARTMAN: Good day, agent.

(Agent Nightingale enters his car, followed by a scream of frustration and heavy thumps accompanied by the car's horn. Agent Nightingale then starts his car and drives away. Presumably he has forgotten that his tape recorder is on. He occasionally talks to himself, but the recorder can't pick up the words over the car's engine. Recording ends when the tape runs out.)



The Manuscript

It is unknown just how many pages make up The Manuscript, but they potentially number in the hundreds. Based on my investigation, it is likely that Agent Nightingale had amassed more than what was present in the air vent, but the location of the extant pages remains unknown.

My research in Bright Falls hit a dead end when it came to these pages. Although the provenance of the notes is unclear, their style is unmistakably that of Wake's. Just how or when these pages were written, or to what end, remains a mystery. Wake arrived in Bright Falls two weeks before Deerfest and had supposedly never been to the town before. How would he be able to write page after page depicting events related to actual town residents? Some of these residents are now missing, while others did not care to comment and became quite aggressive when I persisted with my questioning.

Whether the pages were predictive of future events or some complex incantation that caused the events to occur may never be solved to any degree of satisfaction.

.....
OPPOSITE: A sample of one of the manuscript pages, in the location of its discovery.

four days after she reached the age of twenty-six, Maggie decided her life was over. If asked to explain why, she could not have answered. If pressed, she might admit it had something to do with Samuel. How he had left three months ago without a word, and how she had just seen him at a party, and how he had his arm around a beautiful girl she'd never seen before. It was more than that of course - it was always more than that. That's why she was walking the seven miles to Lovers' Peak. Teenagers had parties out there, and very occasionally someone would fall or jump. She hiked the trails wearing her old headlamp, following the bouncing ball of light like she was reading the lyrics to a song. When she reached the peak she switched the headlamp off. If asked, she would say that she did not jump. She simply inched herself closer and closer to the edge until the inevitable happened. Eyes wide open, she fell rapidly, but death was quicker. In her last moment, she saw a great cloud of ink rise from the tree canopy and catch her like an insect in amber. It held her softly, the way Samuel once did, and by the time it brought her down to the forest floor to settle on her feet it was as though she were reborn and ready to start her new life. Perhaps she would visit an old friend and

.....
ABOVE: Testing of soil residue on the page indicates it was indeed found near Lovers' Peak.

Ellen shivered as the storm rolled in. A sweater and jacket should have been plenty to ward off the chill, but it was dark and suddenly so bitter that the stars looked jagged. A scientist should always be prepared, she chided herself.

Ellen wasn't weird, no matter what the other 7th graders said. Her mind just worked differently. Which was why she was sitting in the forest with her ears stopped up and a mini tape recorder beside her. Soon, she would know the answer to the question: if a tree falls in the middle of the forest and there's no one there to hear it, does it make a sound? Extra credit!

The alder trees rattled against each other in the wind like finger bones. Soon as the storm toppled one over, the recorder would provide the proof if it actually made a sound when it fell.

She shivered again, her breath frosty. She looked around, trying to get her bearings, but everything seemed tilted and out of place. Even the stars were blinking out, like somebody pulled the plug on heaven.

.....
ABOVE: Found half-buried in the forest, this page required forensic washing to be legible.

nothing to cover herself but the shadows that overwhelmed her, she reached for the light switch in desperation. She cringed, and crossed her arms across her chest, hugging her own body close, bracing for the onslaught. Squeezing her eyes shut, she shuddered as she felt the darkness fill her, chasing away every hope, attacking even her memory of her own identity. The alarm of the invasion caused her to cry out involuntarily, which only sped the inevitable: her descent into despair hurtled like a pitch-black boulder thrown down a dark mine shaft. Her cries came out in muffled choking sounds. In her ears, she could hear what sounded like a monsoon crashing its devastation inside the cabin.

Outside, there was near silence. The elderly couple who walked by heard nothing of the internal storm that raged only a few yards away.

"It's cold," the old woman said to her husband, "suddenly very cold." Her gray curls shook as she shivered.

The old man smiled. "You're always cold," he said.

There did seem to be an extra breeze through the forest. He slipped his jacket off and put it over her shoulders, thinking he was rescuing the nearest damsel in distress.

.....
ABOVE: Accompanying notes indicate that this page was found on the Elderwood Nature Trail, near the tree known as "The Great Old One."

Worst vacation ever. Two weeks off a year and Blaine had to spend it driving around in an RV with his in-laws from Tokyo. People acted like they had never seen a redwood tree, and his mother-in-law found every jerkwater town "cute." Nothing cute about Bright Falls, just redneck dopes asking him what kind of mileage he got in the Winnebago. Didn't help that his wife Asako's spastic colon was kicking up with all the fast food, making her totally useless. It all fell on Blaine.

He wanted to barrel on to Longview or Portland, someplace with a Sizzler and a multiplex, but his in-laws had seen the mountain turnout and wanted to stay and watch the sunset. Like the sun never set in Japan. Fine, Blaine stayed in the RV while the three of them stood against the railing taking pictures.

Geez, it got dark fast up here in Nowheresville. Hardly see a thing. One minute it was twilight, and the next

.....
ABOVE: Page reportedly found beside an abandoned RV.

Bill rocked on the porch of his cabin as the last of the light faded, listening to his stomach growl. When his little brother disappeared twenty-six years ago, at least Bill got dinner. Oh sure, folks had traded tales of screams in the night, and nothing but a smear of blood left behind, and poor Timmy this and poor Timmy that, but Bill had insisted the brat must have gotten lost or fallen down a well. Timmy was always careless. Always sticking his nose in places it didn't belong.

Clara was the same way. Bill's wife. Clara never liked the cabin - always worried about being so far from other folks, always seeing things in the trees, always asking him dumb questions. Now, Clara had disappeared too. Snatched away an hour ago, leaving a pan of meatloaf fixings on the table.

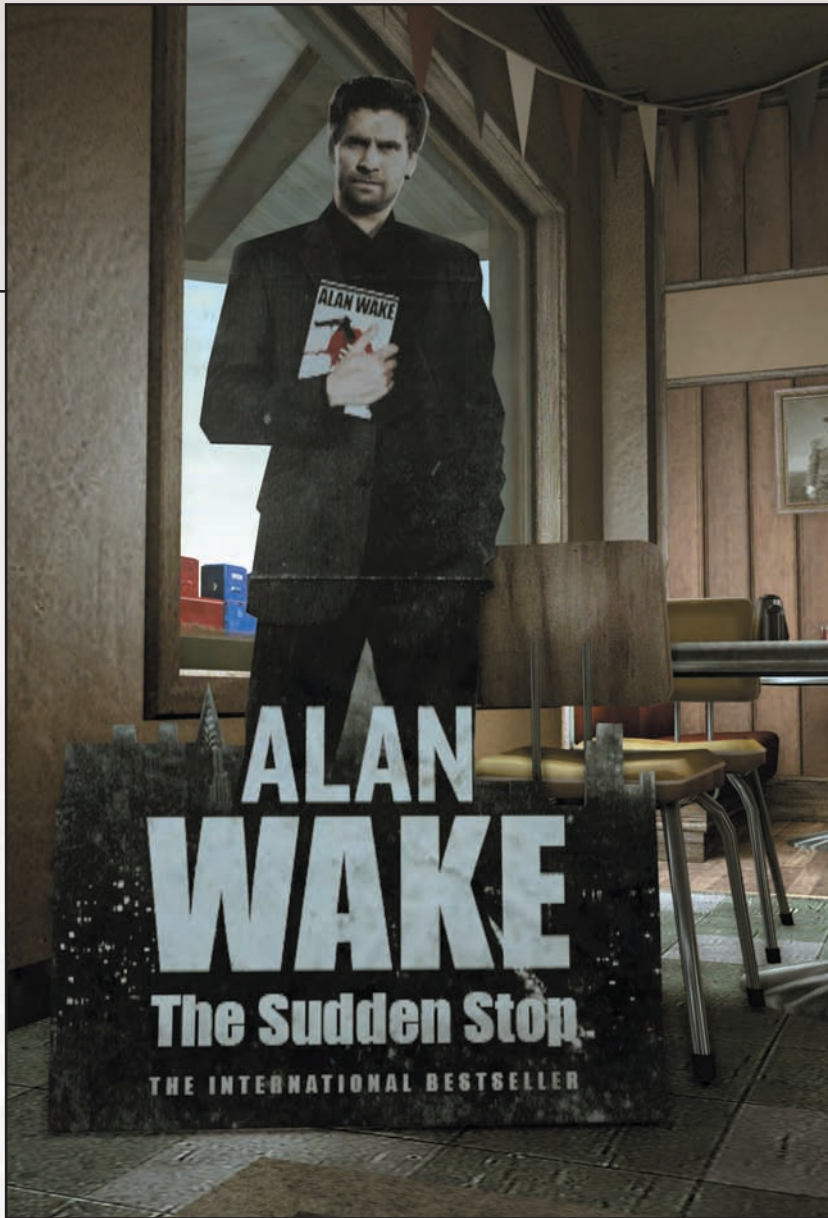
The night deepened, but Bill maintained the same unhurried rocking. He liked the gathering darkness, the way the shadows piled up on each other. All these years and he never missed his little brother and he wouldn't miss Clara either. He would miss her meatloaf though.

.....
 ABOVE: Page found near abandoned cabin in the woods north of Cauldron Lake.

If Donny Ray thought Darlene was going to fall for that "I run out of gas" nonsense, he had another thing coming. She had slammed the door of his 4x4 so hard it about cracked the window. She didn't care. Donny Ray did, though, running after her, yelling who did she think she was. Darlene knew who she was. She was the one saying shove it to Donny Ray, which was why she lay hunkered down in the weeds, listening to the crickets while Donny Ray thrashed around in the darkness, bellowing about what he was going to do to her when he found her.

Crickets got real quiet, but Donny Ray didn't notice. Darkness boiled up from the trees, and he didn't notice that either, not even when it rolled right towards him. Heart pounding, Darlene eased towards the road and started walking quickly back to town. She promised herself she wouldn't run, wouldn't panic, wouldn't give in to the way that thing's

.....
 ABOVE: Notes indicate this page was found in a ditch alongside Route 21B.



Alan Wake's Fiction

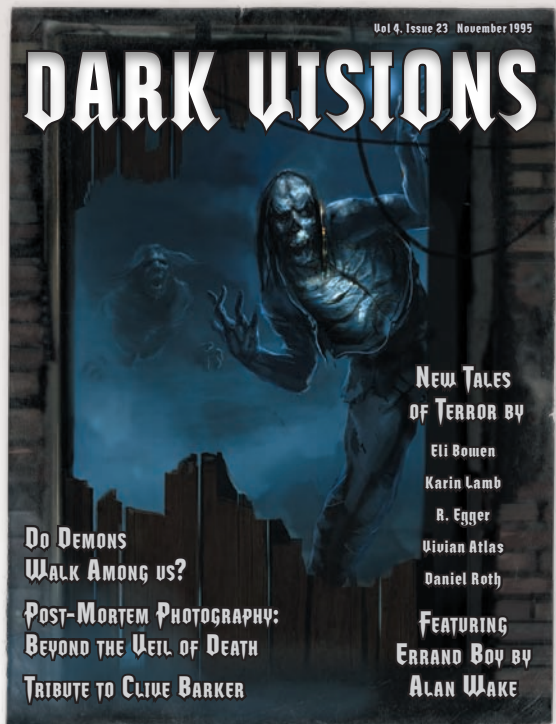
Alan Wake's fiction ranges from the visceral pulp-magazine horror tales of his early career to the engrossing crime thrillers that later brought him international acclaim. While the subject matter changed, Wake's fiction itself remains charged by his own unique psyche and the doubts and fears he contends with. Wake could not escape himself through fiction; if anything, his fiction reflected a deeper version of himself.

Thus we see repeated in Wake's universe, stories of fractured father-son relationships, accounts of lurking evil, and of the hero's dawning awareness of his predicament. These themes haunt Wake's fiction and give his fans glimpses into the epic forces that shape his emotional and creative life.

In Bright Falls, Alan Wake confronted his most terrifying nightmare, a place where his fiction, based on manuscript pages found scattered across the area, seemed to become literally manifest. Even the lighthouse that played such a prominent role in his first published story, "Errand Boy," is part of the ominous landscape of Bright Falls.

The same dark power that inextricably drew me to this place is the same dark power that called to Wake, and while my journey nearly destroyed my personal life, the cost of coming to Bright Falls may have been even greater for Alan Wake and his wife.

OPPOSITE: Photograph of the Wake standee that once stood in the Oh Deer Diner. It was most likely taken by Rose Marigold.



Errand Boy

By Alan Wake

Alan Wake's first published story, "Errand Boy," a long out-of-print horror tale, was written when Wake was only eighteen, and previously available only in dog-eared copies of *Dark Visions* magazine. Clearly, Wake was concerned with the same battle between good and evil that he would explore in his more popular crime fiction.

.....
 ABOVE: Cover of the *Dark Visions* magazine in which Alan Wake's first published story appeared.

Hard to drive with a fist gripping your heart, squeezing tighter with every passing mile, every minute getting him closer to the father he had never met. Daniel managed it – he always did. You tough it out, put pedal to the metal and never look back. Aunt Hannah, the woman who had raised him when his mother died, would have said to ignore the letter, let sleeping dogs lie, Danny, but she was broiling in a senior community in Arizona, and besides, how do you ignore a last chance?

Dear Daniel,

I hope you are well. I am not. Not sure how you will respond to this request, but I am very near death and wanted to see you once before the end. You are eighteen now — and yes, I was aware of your birthday last week — a grown man, as it were, and I am hoping you can forgive me my many sins of omission. I have things to tell you about your family history that might make the journey to Plunder worthwhile. If you choose to cast this letter aside, know at least that I have often thought of you and your mother, and never without a deep sense of longing and regret.

Your loving father,
 Willem Carey

So here he was, bouncing down the backroads along the North Carolina coast, completely off the grid, nothing on either side but dense pine forest, and nothing up ahead but the edge of the world. If it hadn't been for the hand-drawn map that his father had included in the letter, Daniel would have never even known where Plunder was. *God* probably didn't know where Plunder

was. Daniel still wasn't sure what he was going to do when he finally faced his father, hug him or dropkick him straight through death's wide-open door.

Daniel steered the old Ford pickup along the narrow, rutted road with one hand, searching in vain for a radio station with the other. The late afternoon sun streaked through the gnarly trees that overhung the road and cast twisted shadows across the asphalt. He hadn't seen another car in over a half hour.

Something darted out of the woods — he slammed on the brakes too late, felt something crunch under the tires. He pulled over to the side of the road, got out. A huge squirrel writhed in the middle of the road, legs twitching. No...it wasn't a squirrel, it was a weasel or a gopher, maybe. Whatever it was, it was unrecognizable now, just a mass of black fur with pink guts pouring out one side, entrails steaming in the cool air.

Daniel found a large stone by the side of the road, hefted it with both hands and walked over to the poor thing. You clean up your mess, that was what his aunt always said. You clean up after yourself, you make the hard choices.

The animal glared at him, the hate in its eyes like hot pokers. A bubble of blood formed on its lips as it thrashed on the road, flat yellow teeth bared. Daniel lifted the rock and dropped it down on the creature, crushing its skull. It shrieked, actually seemed to lunge at him before dying.

He scooted the crushed body into the underbrush with a dead branch, wiped his hands on his pants. He was almost back to the car when he looked around, realized that the woods had grown silent. Not a bird call. Not the rustle of leaves from the wind. Not even the buzzing of insects. Total silence. He walked slowly to the car, but once inside, he peeled rubber.

Big mistake not to top off the tank an hour ago when he

passed the Chevron station. The needle on the gauge was barely a quarter full now. Have to fill up in Plunder, which better be coming up soon, he thought. He had imagined this would be a simple day trip: leave early from his dorm on the other side of the state, meet Willem Carey and listen to his sad excuses. Maybe Willem wanted to teach him how to throw a curve ball or tie a fishing lure before he died, maybe give him some fatherly advice

about women or a family album filled with strangers. It didn't matter what Willem Carey was offering, Daniel wasn't accepting anything from him. Too late now. Eighteen years too late. So why are you doing this, Daniel? Hard to pass up the chance to meet the man...the man he had loved and hated and *missed* ever since he could remember, that's why. He pressed down on the accelerator, the truck racing forward, not sure if he was running away from ghosts or running toward them.

It was almost dark when Daniel finally broke out of the trees and saw what passed for a town. Had to be Plunder, since the road dead-ended just past two small buildings — a one-pump gas



station and a weathered clapboard structure with Maritime Café painted on the side, letters dripping. A few derelict fishing boats bobbed listlessly in the harbor. A dozen shacks perched on the rocky hills nearby, looking like they were about to tumble down the slope. He cursed softly as he spotted the CLOSED sign in the window of the gas station.

Daniel parked in front of the café, saw an old man hunched on a stool inside, a woman behind the counter. They stared at him as he got out of the car, tracked him as he walked inside.

“Hi,” Daniel said to the gray-haired woman behind the counter, a middle-aged wad of dough in a dirty apron and hairnet. He sat down on one of the stools, noted the collection of ships-in-a-bottle lined up behind her, men-of-war and sloops and galleons in full sail, intricately made and perfectly accurate. Strange to see such care and attention on display when the café itself smelled like chuck steak left in an unplugged refrigerator for a month or two.

The woman fingered her apron. “You lost, hon?”

“Lost? Oh, he’s lost alright,” the old man at the counter cackled, started coughing, wiped his mouth with the back of a grizzled hand. The plate in front of him held the remains of a fish, the head still on it, the skin patchy and dotted with lumps.

It took an effort for Daniel to tear his eyes from the fish. “Is... is the gas station closed for the day?”

“Lost *and* out of gas,” drawled the old man, rooting around in his mouth with his index finger. “Pitiful, just pitiful.”

“Grayson’s gone hunting,” said the woman. “Should be back sometime tomorrow.”

“There’s no one else who can sell me gas?” asked Daniel.

“Nope.” The old man pulled his finger out of his mouth and stared at the tip. “No cellphone, no television, no internet.” He

looked at Daniel, a burst capillary in the white of his right eye like a thin red worm. “You’s on your own now, buttercup, just like us.”

“I got it.” The woman pointed at Daniel. “You’re Willem’s boy. He’s been waiting for you.”

“We’s *all* been waiting for you,” said the old man.

The woman snapped at the old man with a dishrag.

“You lookin’ for Willem?” The old man said to Daniel. He held up the fish and shook it, sent bits of flesh flying from the backbone. “Well, here he is.”

“Go on, Ephraim, get out of here,” said the woman. She waited until the old man shuffled out the door. “I’ll take you to see your daddy soon as I close up. Be just a few minutes.”

Daniel waited in the car, eager to get out of the café, eager to get out of this grimy, gutshot little town as soon as he could. It had been a mistake to come. He slumped over the steering wheel, rested his head on the back of his hands.

“Wake up, sleepyhead.” The woman from the café waved at him as he jerked upright. “You ready to meet your daddy?”

“Can you just tell me where he lives?”

“I best take you myself,” said the woman. “Folks around here... we’re protective of Willem. He’s got a gift. A special gift.”

“I understand that he’s sick.”

“Well, Willem’s been sick before, but he always gets over it.” The woman spat on the street. “Leave your automobile, we’ll take a short cut,” she said, trudging up a nearly-invisible path leading towards the water. Ten minutes later they crested a ridge in the darkness; saw a dirty-white lighthouse perched on a rocky promontory — it looked like a wedding cake with the bridegroom missing. Waves crashed against the far side, sent salt spray into the air.

“There it is,” said the woman, pointing. “Willem’s going to be pleased as punch to see you.”

Daniel hesitated.

“Not getting cold feet are you, hon?” The woman showed a yellow grin and Daniel thought of the animal he had run over, baring its teeth as it died.

“Thanks,” said Daniel, walking past her, the tiny hairs at the back of his neck lifting. He got to the front door of the lighthouse, looked around, but the old woman had already gone back the way she had come. He started to knock on the front door, stopped himself. Decided to go around the back. Nice to know what he was getting himself into, not be led everywhere like some lost lamb. He walked slowly around the lighthouse, listening for something inside, but there was only the howling wind.

A sudden gust staggered him, drove him towards the water as though it was trying to push him in. He glanced down, unsure what exactly he was seeing under the waves, not believing it. *Cars*. What looked like three or four became six, then eight, then a *dozen* cars, at least. Vintage cars and newer models, a yellow convertible and a white minivan, more and more of them under the surface, stacked up on top of each other.

“Daniel?”

Daniel whirled around. A tall, rangy man wearing a long, black coat and a shirt white as frost stood not six inches away from him.

“*Daniel*,” the man breathed his name, the wind whipping his long, dark hair around his face. “I hoped you would come, but I wouldn’t have blamed you if...” He put a hand on Daniel’s shoulder, saw Daniel’s expression and released him. “I’m Willem.”

Not *I’m your father*. If he had said that, Daniel would have turned and walked back to his car without a word, would have

driven out of town until he ran out of gas or got a cellphone signal. Willem didn’t say that though, his greeting an acknowledgement of the gap that existed between them, the snapped thread, the broken promise. Daniel stared back at the man, trying to see a piece of himself in that narrow, deeply-lined face, searching for some recognition of what his mother had seen in the man, but all he saw in those sunken eyes was weariness and tension and overwhelming sadness.

“I know what you must be thinking,” said Willem.

“You have no idea what I’m thinking. You should be grateful.”

Willem looked like he had been slapped. “I suppose I deserve that.” If he was waiting for Daniel to disagree he’d be waiting until the lighthouse crumbled into the sea.

Daniel shivered.

“Come inside out of the wind,” said Willem. “I’ll make you some hot tea, and...”

Daniel jerked a thumb at the submerged cars. “Lot of lousy



drivers around here.”

The storm screamed around them. “Times are hard,” said Willem. “People drive their cars off the promontory, report them stolen and collect the insurance money.”

“Times must have been hard for a long time,” said Daniel.

“Longer than you can imagine.” Willem ran a hand through his tangled hair. “Shall we get out of this gale and warm your bones?”

Daniel didn’t move.

“I understand,” said Willem. “You don’t really want to be here. You think it was a mistake coming. Most of all, I understand how vexed at me you are.”

“Three for three, Willem.” The man didn’t even look all that sick. His skin was blotchy, but he moved fast enough and seemed alert. The whole thing about dying was probably a scam to get Daniel out here and ask him for a handout.

“You’ve journeyed a long way to see me,” said Willem, “and I know it wasn’t pity that drove you, but curiosity. I was the same way once. Well, here’s your chance to learn some things.” His long face split into a smile. “Besides, it’s easy enough to leave whenever you like.”

Daniel turned away, feeling as though he were trapped in one of the cars below, driving down down down into the darkness, where nameless things scuttled across the ocean floor. When Willem abruptly started toward the door of the lighthouse, Daniel hurried after him.

Willem held the door open for him — it had been thick and solid at one time, a true bulwark against the raging weather that buffeted the lighthouse, but the wood was spongy with age now, worm-ridden from time and tide. Willem had to use his shoulder to close it afterward, didn’t even bother throwing the heavy bolt.

The landing was damp and dimly lit, the gray slate floor deeply worn. Another, smaller door was set into the wall under the staircase, probably leading to some underground storeroom. An iron staircase rose up up up in a winding, lacy spiral.

Willem shrugged off his coat, hung it on a hook. “This way,” he called, taking the steps two at a time, the iron creaking. “Mind you watch your step.”

Daniel looked at the front door again, then followed after him.

The living area on the second floor contained a small kitchen with a two-burner gas stove, a cluttered desk made of rough planks, and a sagging brown leather sofa. A pallet in the corner evidently served as Willem’s bed, a worn quilt his only blanket. The sofa faced a small window that looked out at the ocean. Daniel could see the wind beating at the glass, whitecaps in the darkness.

“Please, make yourself...make yourself at home,” said Willem as he busied himself putting a battered tea kettle on the stove, setting out a mug, his hands huge and powerful. He shifted back and forth, glanced out the window that faced the shore. “Sorry for the poor accommodations. I...I don’t receive many visitors.”

“The woman from the café said you’re the big cheese in Plunder.”

Willem cocked his head. “Pardon me?”

“A big shot. She said you have a special gift.”

Willem glanced out the window again. “Well...I do what I have to.”

Daniel sat on the musty sofa, sank in so deep that it felt like being swallowed alive. He lifted himself out, pushing his hands deep into the space between the cushions, and felt something hard. He pulled out a driver’s license from the sofa. Janice

Cooke, Middleton, Tennessee, expired seventeen years ago. Pretty girl. Pretty enough to have replaced his mother after Willem abandoned her. Timing was right.

Willem stood over the stove, waiting for the kettle to boil, shoulders slumped. He seemed skinnier without his coat, his face the color of pale mushrooms. The waves crashed against the rocks with a sound like distant cannon fire, and Daniel wished he were anywhere except here. He wandered over to the desk.

Willem put a spoonful of loose tea in the mug, poured in hot water, and handed it to Daniel.

Daniel took a tentative sip. Nodded. “Good.” It wasn’t good, it was weak and sour. He shivered.

“Are you hungry?” asked Willem.

Daniel was famished. “No, I’m fine.” He picked up a strip of photos from the desk, faded black-and-whites spewed out from a booth in some tourist spot. His mother and Willem mugged for the camera, heads pressed together, smiling, Willem handsome as any movie star. Daniel’s mother had died when he was ten. In all that time he had never seen her as happy as she looked in those photos. He was aware of Willem watching him with those dark, sunken eyes. “*What?*”

Willem shook his head. “You look so much like your mother. I hadn’t prepared myself for that,” he said, his voice a whisper now. “I...I hadn’t prepared myself for that at all.” The lights in the room flickered, and he glanced out the shoreside window again.

“Something wrong?” said Daniel.

“I loved your mother,” said Willem, his eyes suddenly shiny with tears. The man’s emotion surprised Daniel, like seeing a tarantula carrying a valentine.

“You loved her until you met Janice Cooke.” Daniel whipped the driver’s license across the desk. “She must have made you

forget all about us.”

“No,” said Willem, still locked onto the strip of photos, oblivious to what Daniel had said. “Women...women have always been... drawn to me, but in all these years, all these long years, your mother was the only one I truly loved.”

“Yeah, well it did her a lot of good.”

“I did the best I could by her, Daniel.” Willem gripped the edge of the desk. “I put myself in *peril* for her,” he said, clawing at the desk so hard that one of his fingernails lifted off and fluttered to the floor like a translucent moth.

Daniel gaped at the fingernail, disgusted, but Willem seemed unaware of what had happened, distracted by sounds only he could hear.

The lights flickered again. “I...I need to go down and check the generator,” said Willem, already in motion.

Daniel listened to his footsteps fading, idly rifled through the papers on the desk. He picked up a leather bound book, “Manifest for the Brigantine Lady of Carolina” etched into the cover. The pages were wavy, as though soaked and later dried out, and the writing was so cramped he had to turn the book towards the light to decipher it. The entries from the early 1800s were lists of cargo brought over from England and France: bolts of cloth and farm equipment, spices and sugar and molasses from the Indies. One of the last entries was dated April 21, 1827. He stopped breathing as he read the captain’s notes.

We set sail today for the West coast of Africa to pick up a load of slaves. Our first descent into this dark and unholy trade. The men aren't happy with the task, but the big merchant ships have taken the profit from our usual cargo, and we have families to feed. Ugly work to be sure, but God will forgive

us in time and the crew will cease their grousing soon as the money clinks in their pockets. —James Riggs, Captain

Daniel saw a long line of numbers, ledger entries starting with 87 males, 105 females, each entry struck out with a lesser number marked underneath. The last numbers were 31 males, 42 females. A long list of atrocities were detailed in the pages, brutal beatings and torture, the slightest resistance punished without mercy. The brigantine was a horrorshow in full sail. The last notation from the captain was from November 11, 1827.

Almost home now and with high winds to hurry us on our way, though we can't arrive too soon for me. I cannot wait for this damned voyage to be over. The screams of the Africans still echo in my head, one in particular, a village chief who cursed us all with each stroke of the lash, vowing revenge. We lost well over half our cargo before delivering them to the auction block at Charleston, but we still carry a fortune in gold back to Plunder, a fine price, and well worth the blot on our immortal souls that Willem Carey, the cook bleats about. —James Riggs, Captain

“You should put that down,” said Willem, climbing back to the living area.

“I should do a lot of things,” said Daniel, staring at the ink blot at the end of the captain’s last note, as though the pen had been held frozen over the page too long. “This should be in a museum somewhere.”

“It should be burned.”

“Is this what you brought me up here to see?” said Daniel. “The dark roots of our family tree? Nothing like an ancestor in the slave trade.”

“Did your mother ever speak of me?”

“Not a word. You might as well have been a ghost.”

Willem lowered his eyes. “Well, there wasn’t a day went by that I didn’t think of her. I just wished I got a chance to explain to her—”

A knock echoed on the door downstairs, and Willem flinched. “I shouldn’t have asked you to come, Daniel.”

“Little late for that,” said Daniel. “Whoever it is, tell them to go away.”

“I...I can’t,” said Willem. A thin trickle of blood started from one nostril, ran down to the edge of his lip. “They won’t be satisfied until I’ve done my duty.”

“Who’s at the door?”

Willem grabbed the ship’s manifest, hurled it against the wall.

“Who’s at the door, Willem?”

“Captain Riggs,” Willem whispered.

Daniel started to laugh but the look on Willem’s face stopped him. “You’re serious.”

The pounding on the door was louder now, insistent.

“We have to hurry,” said Willem.

Daniel shook him off.

“You don’t understand—”

“Sure I do,” said Daniel. “Either this is some practical joke, or you really think some dead sea captain is knocking on your door. What else is there to know?”

“Captain Riggs isn’t dead,” said Willem. “Not exactly. None of them are.”

The sound of splintering wood echoed up the stairs.

“This way,” beckoned Willem, starting downstairs, “It’s your only hope.”

Daniel ran down the stairs and found Willem pressing his back

against the front door, which was groaning under assault from outside. Daniel joined him at the door, did what he could to keep it closed. Fortunately, when Willem had gone to check the generator, he must have locked the door and thrown the bolt. It still might not be enough.

“The Lady of Carolina went down in a storm just off the coast of Plunder,” said Willem, straining against the door. “Waves so high they snapped the masts like twigs. All hands lost, all of us drowned and washed up later that week, bellies bloated...”

“OPEN UP, WILLEM CAREY, THAT’S AN ORDER!”

Daniel felt the blows against the door beating through his body. “So...those are *ghosts* trying to get inside?”

“Not ghosts, Daniel.” Blood flowed from both of Willem’s nostrils now, a stream of red like a handlebar moustache. “Ghosts can’t hurt you. Ghosts don’t want anything you have.”

“So what *are* they?” Daniel shuddered as a section of the door split away, his feet slipping as he tried to brace his back against the wood.

“The village chief cursed us for our cruelty,” said Willem, his voice different now, deeper, and with an accent that hadn’t been heard in 200 years. “We called the Africans cannibals, but they weren’t. The chief taught us a lesson, showed us who the true cannibals were. He damned us to a wretched existence, midway between life and death, our monstrous, ravening evil on full display.”

A section of the door burst apart in a spray of rotting wood and a hand reached through, clutching at them. A hand, more a talon, the skin leprous and papery, the nails black and crusted, and the stink that seeped through that hole in the door...

“STAND DOWN, WILLEM CAREY, AND LET US IN!”

“Not you, Willem,” said Daniel, squirming to stay away from

that grasping hand from the other side, “you weren’t cursed. The manifest said...”

The bolt holding the door in place groaned from the combined weight from the other side.

“I was the best of a scurvy lot, but that didn’t make me a choirboy,” said Willem. A patch of hair fell from his scalp. “The rest of them are bound to this small area around the lighthouse, but me...”

The bolt started to tear from the doorframe.

“Me...I had freedom to roam, freedom to find what we needed,” said Willem. The hand reaching through the hole in the door clawed at his arm, peeling away the flesh in strips, his white shirt soaked with blood now. “My *gift*.” He spat onto the floor. “I was an errand boy, sent to fetch and carry for the captain and crew, which made me as bad as any of them. *Worse*, even.” His eyes were wide. “Plunder was ripe for the plucking, but time goes by and soon there’s less and less to choose from. Has to be maidens fair to sustain the beasts that we had become, young ones ripe with promise, fresh meat through and through.”

Daniel thought of the driver’s license he had found, thought of Janice Cooke and thought of all the other cars piled up in the dark, deep water outside. Young ones, ripe with promise, brought back here by the handsome man Daniel had seen in the photo strip, the charming man kissing his mother.

“The townspeople tolerated this?” said Daniel. “They had to know...”

“Stacks of hundred-dollar gold pieces make folks forget their souls, lad.” Willem lowered his eyes. “It sure as blazes made the captain and the rest of us forget ours.”

The front door splintered, half torn from the frame.

“You’ve seen the people hereabouts, lad,” said Willem. “They’re

more dead than alive, sucked clean...” His feet started to skid across the floor, unable to hold back the creatures on the other side. “I had to roam farther and farther afield to bring back... bring back what we fed upon.”

The door shuddered.

“We...we can’t hold them,” cried Daniel.

“Aye,” said Willem, “but there’s a way out yet. The other door, the one under the stairs leads to a tunnel that goes direct to the mainland. Supposed to be used at high tide, when the lighthouse is cut off from land.”

Another chunk of the door burst in, and through the gap Daniel glimpsed a nightmare: grotesque faces, puffed-up drowned men with bulging eyes and rotting teeth, faces that could never have been human.

“Now!” Willem carried Daniel along, pushed him into the emergency exit, and slammed the door. He flipped on a dim electric light, their faces shadowed in the narrow, stone corridor. Moments later the inner door was under attack.

“Go on, lad, I’ll hold ‘em back long enough for you to get out the other side,” said Willem. “Run to your car and don’t look back.”

“Come with me,” said Daniel.

Willem shook his head as the door bowed in.

“Come *with* me,” said Daniel.

“I loved your mother,” said Willem, eyes half closed with the memory. “Loved her too much to...to do my duty. There was a price to letting her go, though.” He looked at Daniel. “*You* were the price.”

Daniel pulled away.

“The first moon after your eighteenth year, that would be your time. I promised Captain Riggs I’d deliver you like a fresh



spring lamb.”

Daniel backed down the corridor.

“That’s it, *go*,” said Willem. “Run!”

Daniel hesitated.

“I would have gone ahead with it too,” said Willem, voice rising, “so don’t you dare consider me as anything better than I

am. I would have offered you up on a silver platter and ate my fill, just like the rest of them, but then...then I saw you, and I saw your mother. Saw her right there in front of me just as clear as the moment I met her.” He shook his head. “No way could I allow the crew to have you. No way in *Hades*.”

The door groaned, hinges yielding as a chorus of howls rose from the other side, louder and louder, ravenous.

“It’s over, Daniel. The captain and the crew...we’re falling apart now, all of us.” Willem looked straight at him. “Get out of here, you fool!”

Daniel ran down the tunnel, splashing through the moisture puddled on the stone floor, his head bent forward so as not to crack his head on the low ceiling. Just as he reached the opening at the other end, he heard a scream, and looked back.

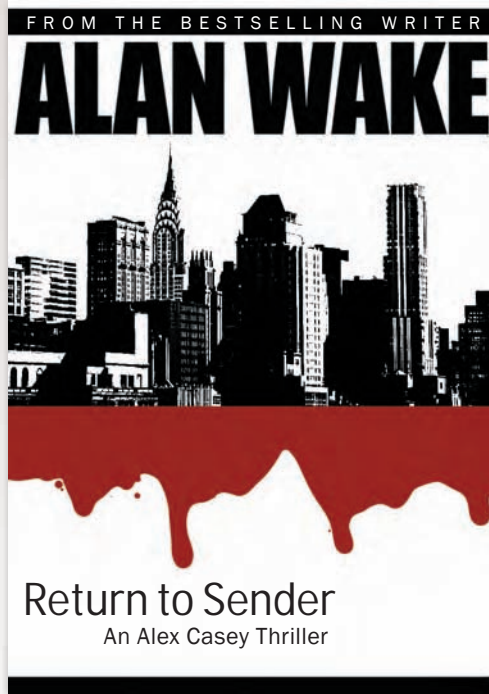
In the flickering light he saw Willem wrestling with a dozen of them: zombies, cannibals, slavers, whatever monstrous term fit he didn’t know, but there was blood and brains everywhere, as Willem beat them back, using the narrow doorway to his own advantage. There were too many of them, though, desperate with hunger, and he gave ground with every passing second.

Daniel saw one of the slavers tear into Willem’s leg with his teeth, heard Willem howl as ferociously as any of them, his face contorted, hair falling out in clumps as he ripped and tore at them.

“Dad!” Daniel hadn’t intended to say it, would have never believed himself capable of saying it, but as the word echoed down the corridor, Willem looked back at him. It was dark, barely enough light to see anything at that distance, but Daniel thought he saw Willem straighten, nod his head in acknowledgement, and then he was lost under the undead swarm, lost in a tumble of rotting flesh and bones bursting through parchment skin.

Daniel ran out the end of the tunnel, ran up the hill and didn’t look back again.

Thirty miles outside of Plunder, a long way from the highway, Daniel’s car finally ran out of gas. He listened to the engine gasp and die, the silence of the night rolling in like fog. Just him alone with the stars now. He tried his cellphone. Still no signal. He sat there for a few minutes, got out and started walking.



Return to Sender

By Alan Wake

The third novel in the Alex Casey Crime Series, *Return to Sender* is a treasure trove of clues to this author's internal life. In this first chapter, Casey's survival is in question, and he must directly challenge the evil that threatens him. Wish fulfillment on Wake's part or a strategy for confronting his own personal monsters?

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 ABOVE: Best known for her iconoclastic photography, Alice Wake also produced commercial design for her husband's book covers.

CHAPTER 1: LIGHT YOU UP

If Anton 'the fat man' Dubovic had ever earned a Boy Scout merit badge in Fire Prevention I wouldn't be in this mess. If the two sluggos with the fat man weren't scared to death of him, one of them might mention that spraying high-octane gasoline around a garage could have unpleasant consequences for all concerned. Everett Krieger, the sage of Wall Street, is screaming loud and clear about the fire hazard, but since Krieger is currently trussed up and the object of that high-octane drenching, his opinion isn't given much weight by the fat man. One spark, one gunshot, and the whole place goes up like a napalm strike.

Not that any of this would mean shit to me, except I'm currently hiding under Krieger's candy-apple red Ferrari Testarossa, which has about seven inches of road clearance, and the gasoline that the fat man is hosing down Krieger with is sluicing across the concrete floor of the garage and soaking me down to my boxers.

"You must understand, Mr. Krieger," said the fat man, "I am not nice person."

I heard gasoline splattering onto the concrete as Krieger blubbered. The fumes were making me lightheaded, but nobody else seemed to notice. Then again, they had murder on their minds.

"I bet you will stink when you burn, Mr. Krieger," said the fat man. "I bet you will stink like the bad barbeque that upsets my tummy."

Gasoline is *cold*, by the way, real shivery stuff, and Krieger's screaming had given me a headache. Plus, the tip of my nose kept grazing the underside of the Ferrari, so it was raw and sore by now. I was about ready to slide out from under the car, cap the fat man and the sluggos and warm myself up with my own

burning hair as the whole place whooshed into flames. I didn't do that. Instead, I carefully tilted my head to get a better look at what was happening a few feet away from me and promised myself that next time I'd exercise better judgment. I won't do that *either*, of course. I never learn.

Sure, I should have passed on the job when Krieger's daughter showed up last week, but the girl was scared to death. Lot of scared girls out there these days, but she did it better than most, and her being a homely thing kind of won me over, and dragging a kid along to boot. Hit me in my soft spot. All that family money, but Jane Krieger stayed a plain Jane. Big, thick glasses and awkward shoes, the way she slumped her shoulders when she talked... made me want to take care of her. She said her father, Wall St. financier Everett Krieger had gotten involved with some very dangerous men, and she was worried about something happening to him. "I know you're much too...talented for bodyguard work, Mr. Casey, I just want you to keep an eye on daddy. My father doesn't even have to know you've been hired. He'd probably be upset with me if he found out."

Turns out Everett Krieger hadn't just gotten involved with some dangerous men; he'd ripped off the fat man, a sweaty psychopath linked to the Russian mob. Anyone who thinks that fat men are jolly has never met Anton Dubovic. The last thing that cracked the fat man up, really gave him a case of the giggles, was that recording of the 911 call from a woman who had been carjacked in Texas. You've heard it, haven't you? Woman knows she's on her way to a real horrorshow, but she manages a cellphone call from the trunk of her car, connects to a 911 operator who's got the hiccups. The woman keeps whispering about being kidnapped, and the 911 operator can't hear her because he keeps hiccupping into the receiver, and the cellphone signal is dying, and the woman

is panicking, and the 911 operator keeps on hiccupping, saying 'pardon me,' 'pardon me, y'all.' A regular laugh riot. They found the woman's body a week later, what was left of her anyway. The fat man plays that tape all the time, and it never fails to bring tears to his eyes. He even imitates her voice and the hiccups.

So, when the fat man huffed and puffed his way into Krieger and Associates a year ago, wanting to park eighteen million dollars, Krieger should have very politely suggested that Mr. Dubovic would be better served at one of the many other fine investment houses, but he didn't. Instead, Krieger told the fat man what he told most of his clients: expect ten to twelve percent annual returns, and cash out anytime you felt like it. Things didn't quite work out like that. Krieger's enormous bet against the Australian dollar went south, coupled with a government takeover of the Nigerian oil industry and a crash in the Brazilian bond market... well, Krieger and Associates had suddenly collapsed like one of those fancy soufflés that Krieger used to jet to Paris to nibble for lunch. Krieger dodged a federal indictment by liquidating all his assets and offering his clients ten cents on the dollar. Most of his clients settled, but the fat man wasn't interested. The fat man had never tipped a waitress or been heard to say 'keep the change.'

"I told you, I don't *have* any offshore accounts," pleaded Krieger. He was a handsome, well-maintained aristocrat who struggled helplessly now, hands bound behind his back, his body roped tight to a supporting column of the garage. Gasoline dripped from his perfectly-cut gray hair. "Don't you think the feds would have found them by now if I did?"

"I should trust Fed dummies?" The fat man laughed. "Fed dummies cannot find their ass with GPS."

I imagine Krieger once took a certain pride in having his own gasoline pump in the garage. Special blend for the Ferrari, might

as well have been jet fuel. Perfectly safe as long as you gassed up in a well-ventilated space, but the fat man likes his privacy, so the doors to the garage were down, the gas running free, and the fumes in the garage so thick that a bright idea might set the place off.

From my vantage spot under car, I could see Krieger's charcoal gray trousers and his socks, cashmere socks with tiny clocks on them. Probably cost two hundred dollars a pair, but what do you expect, they're made from the downy wool scraped off the balls of mountain goats in Tibet. The fat man doesn't wear socks, just slips his 14-DDD tootsies into a pair of blue corduroy bedroom slippers from Target, throws on a bathrobe, and off he goes.

"Fed dummies did not find this secret estate of yours, yes?" said the fat man. "*Anton* found it, though. So, now you pay me."

"I *can't* pay you—"

Gasoline gushed against Krieger's necktie, splashing his Armani suit and perfect Windsor knot. Gasoline ran from his pants leg as though Krieger had pissed himself.

"There is no *can't*, Mr. Krieger," said the fat man. "There is only, 'yes, Anton, here are the numbers to my offshore accounts,' and 'please to forgive me for making you wait, Anton.'"

The fat man had a point. The feds *hadn't* discovered this hundred-acre estate in the rolling hills of upstate New York. It was probably registered to some shell company that existed only in a Bahamian corporation's financial footnotes. So give the fat man some credit. I wouldn't have found the place if a terrified Jane Krieger hadn't called me early this morning and given me the location, said she was *sure* something was going to happen.

I shifted slightly, saw the two sluggos, a couple of nervous XXXL meatbags in blue tracksuits, each of them standing on a radial tire to keep their shoes dry, like that's going to save them if

the garage blows. The smart thing to do if you want Krieger to give up the information would be drag him outside, drench him with gas out *there*, but maybe the fat man wants to use the safe familiarity of the garage against Krieger, like tucking a guy into his soft, comfy bed and maybe fluffing his pillow before breaking out the vicegrips.

"I am losing patience, Mr. Krieger," said the fat man, his thinning black hair plastered to his skull. "You seem to delight in provoking me."

"I'm an honest businessman," said Krieger, lower lip quivering.

The fat man's tiny eyes glowed as he pulled a gold cigarette lighter out of the pocket of his bathrobe.

"Boss," one of the sluggos said gently, "you *really* don't want to do that."

The fat man held the cigarette lighter in front of Krieger's face. "I will light you up like birthday candle."

"Boss, *please*," said the other sluggo. "Krieger goes up, we all go up." He dragged his shoe through the puddled gasoline on the floor. "See boss? Boom."

"Boom." The fat man nodded, pink jowls jiggling in the glare of the overhead fluorescents. "Ah yes, I understand now." He slipped the lighter back into his bathrobe, pulled out a switchblade. "This is safe, yes?" he said to Krieger, "won't cause fire." He flicked it open, admired his reflection in the blade, and I found myself wondering if hippos thought they were beautiful too.

Krieger swallowed, his Adam's apple bobbing.

The fat man carefully slid the blade into Krieger's right nostril. "See?" He looked at the sluggos, waited for a moment, then ripped the blade through the side of Krieger's nose. "See, no boom."

Krieger howled, lurched against the ropes that bound him to

the pillar, blood pouring from his nose.

“You will give me the numbers for your offshore accounts, now,” the fat man said to Krieger.

“P-please,” stammered Krieger.

The fat man slid the blade into Krieger’s other nostril.

“Wait!” gasped Krieger.

“Yes?” said the fat man, cupping one ear. “Did I hear something?”

“The account numbers,” Krieger said, his cut nostril flapping with every breath. “The account numbers are encrypted. Can’t be cracked. You...you need me alive.”

“Then alive you stay, good fellow.” The fat man slowly, gently removed the blade from Krieger’s nostril. “Where are the numbers, Mr. Krieger?”

I was lying right under the edge of the Ferrari’s passenger side now, soaked with gasoline. I hoped that Krieger would direct them to the house, his office, anyplace where they would have to leave him alone, or at least divide their forces, while they confirmed his story.

“They’re under the car,” whimpered Krieger. “The numbers are in a small metal case attached to the underside of the passenger compartment.”

Great. Just...great. I scooted farther back under the car, looking for the case. *There.* A silvery case the size of a cellphone.

“You are certain?” said the fat man.

I could see the case clearly: stainless-steel, secured with two spring-clips, locked solidly in place, but designed for quick removal when needed.

“If you are stalling for time, I will lose charming good nature, Mr. Krieger,” said the fat man.

“You think I’m *stupid*?” said Krieger, blood bubbling from his

nose. “You’re not going to kill me. You need me...Anton. Get the case. We’ll have to go to my office in the city to decrypt the code. I’ll transfer the funds into your account tonight. Double your money.”

The fat man nodded. “I believe you, Mr. Krieger.”

Krieger sagged with relief.

“No, you are not stupid,” said the fat man, looking into his eyes, “but I think you are perhaps too trusting of your own uniqueness.” He smoothed Krieger’s stained white shirt with one hand, then drove the knife into the man’s heart with the other. “It seems, in fact, Mr. Krieger, that *you* are not required to decrypt the code,” he said, cleaning the blade on Krieger’s necktie as the man’s head flopped lifelessly. He slipped the knife back into his bathrobe, turned to the sluggos. “Please to hit the hydraulic autolift.”

I waited until the Ferrari was waist-high off the floor before sliding out from under, the case clutched in one hand. I waved as I scrambled to my feet. “Hey fellas, how’s it hangin’?”

The sluggos reached for their guns before they caught themselves. The fat man just yawned, belted his bathrobe tighter around his enormous frame.

“Open the garage door and air the place out, idiots,” the fat man said to the sluggos. “Then you can shoot our uninvited guest.” He raised his bushy eyebrows to me, half-bowed. “My sincere apologies.”

I pulled my own piece out, centered it between his eyes. “None needed.”

“Ah, the classic standoff,” said the fat man, unperturbed. “I feel like one of your American cowboys at the A-OK Corral.” He pushed out his lower lip. “Let us leave the door down, shall we? Gunfire hurts my ears anyway.” There were way too many teeth

in his smile. “I want to see your face when they break your neck, my dear cowpoke.”

The sluggos rushed me, but they were slow, clearly used to easy prey. I dodged the first one’s attack matador-style, helped him along with a push that slammed him face-first into a metal tool cabinet. He dropped like a slaughterhouse steer.

The other sluggo circled in, but he was cautious now. He sloshed through the gasoline, closer and closer, and I let him, because he was one of those big guys who forgot to keep his chin down. Maybe he never had to worry about it before. He grabbed my left shoulder, grinding down on the bone before I drove my right hand into his throat, crushing his windpipe. He fell to his knees, trying to breathe as his airway swelled shut.

My left arm was completely numb as the fat man charged, barreling at me; he moved faster than the sluggos, faster than I would have believed. One swipe of his enormous paw practically tore my ear off before I could retreat, head ringing. He kept coming. I kicked him twice in the midsection, kicked him *hard*; the strike should have shattered a few ribs, maybe even ruptured his spleen, but the fat man was so padded with blubber that he merely grunted, his smile firmly in place — a killer whale in a blue terrycloth bathrobe.

The fat man circled in as I backed up.

“Not leaving so soon, are you?” mocked the fat man. “We are just getting to know each other.”

“It’s *way* past my bedtime,” I told him. “I need my beauty sleep.”

“The case.” The fat man snapped his fingers. “Give me the case and maybe I will let you go on your way.”

“Give me your address; I’ll mail it to you.” I fainted high as he rushed me, then pivoted, whip-kicked his left knee, heard it crunch.

He ground his teeth as he collapsed, but didn’t utter a sound. He sprawled beside the Ferrari, his bathrobe sopping up gasoline. His smile had returned. I looked down; saw what was making him so happy. Three small dots on my shirt. Three small red dots getting larger. I hadn’t even seen him take the switchblade out, hadn’t felt myself getting stabbed.

“Come closer, little one, I’ll put a Band-Aid on your boo-boo,” said the fat man.

“That...that’s okay,” I said.

The fat man patted the floor beside him. “Come on, no hard feelings.”

“You look like a guy who holds a grudge.”

“Me?” The fat man wiped an imaginary tear. “You have hurt my feelings.”

Unsteady now, I clutched at the case, but it slipped from my grasp, clattered to the floor. I bent to retrieve it, stumbled, and kicked it under the car. I could see it clearly, right under the transmission.

“A pity,” said the fat man, eyes on the case. “Whatever shall you do now?”

The red spots on my shirt were getting bigger.

“You really should sit down before you hurt yourself,” said the fat man.

I staggered toward the door, legs rubbery, and half-fell onto a wooden bench against one wall.

“Isn’t that better?” called the fat man, grunting as he bent under the Ferrari, one leg dragging behind him. “You just take a rest while I get the case, and then we can have a long talk.”

I gave him time. Gave him until he was halfway under the car, his hand on the case before quick-limping it over to the controls of the hydraulic jack and flicking the switch.

The fat man squealed as the jack lowered, slithering across the slick floor, trying to get out. Almost made it out, too. Got his head free anyway, the rest of him pressed against the concrete by the weight of the Ferrari.

“You comfortable?” I asked him.

“Little...tight,” said the fat man. “You might...raise it up a bit.”

“Sure.” I lowered it slightly. Heard him gasp. “Whoops.”

“What...what you want?” hissed the fat man.

“World peace.”

The fat man chuckled. I had to give him credit for that.

“Oh, you mean *now*,” I said. “Well...I’d like to know how you found Krieger’s secret estate.”

The fat man glared at me.

The spots on my shirt were growing, but it was nothing terminal. It did *hurt* though. I lowered the Ferrari a little more.

The fat man groaned louder.

“How did you find this place?” I repeated.

“A...a beautiful little bird told me,” the fat man said, his breathing even more labored now.

“Lucky you.”

“Yes. I am most lucky.”

“The bird who told *me* wasn’t so beautiful,” I said.

“S-sad.”

I watched him squirm under the Ferrari, grunting with the effort, trying to get clear, but he was caught, no two ways about it. I walked over to where Krieger’s body hung from the post, fished his wallet out of his suit jacket. Nice wallet. Probably looked better on the alligator, but still...

Not much cash in the wallet. Rich guys never carried much cash, but Krieger had a black, invitation-only, no-limit AMEX

card, so I guess he thought he had it covered. You could buy a skyscraper with that card, and all they’d ask was ‘would you like that giftwrapped, sir?’ Two photos. One of Krieger on an airport runway, standing in front of his Gulfstream 550, the other of Krieger and some beautiful girl. Strong family resemblance, although the daughter had better cheekbones. Beautiful girl, beautiful bird. No kid. No wedding ring.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the fat man still struggling under the car, but I couldn’t take my eyes away from the photo.

Women are amazing. They get rid of their contact lenses and slip on a pair of ugly, thick glasses and they look different. They don’t wash their hair for a few days, let it just lie there in a tangled mess, and they look even more different. But it’s the *attitude* that really sells things. Slump around, eyes downcast, let your voice quiver at all the right moments...you’re a whole new person now. You’re no longer that gorgeous, confident, sexy creature in the photograph, no, now you’re the mousy, scared little introvert that shuffled into my office, begging me to watch over her daddy.

The fat man had met the beautiful bird, because that’s what worked best to snare him. Me, I met plain Jane, the not so beautiful bird, the one with the borrowed kid, because that was the one who could get to me. She figured no matter what, *one* of us was going to deliver the overseas bank codes to her.

I looked at Krieger dangling there, his shirt a gory mess. Brilliant guy, tough and cold-blooded, but he wasn’t even in the same league as his little girl. He should have just handed over all his money to her, the whole secret stash, and saved his life. Maybe if he had cooperated, Jane would have given him an allowance and let him keep the Gulfstream 550.

I glanced over at the fat man. “Did she tell you she knew how

to decrypt the code?”

“Let me *out* of here,” said the fat man.

“Doesn’t matter,” I told him. “If she doesn’t know how to do it, she’s probably already got some other sap on the line who *does* know how.”

“I have case, you foolish person,” gasped the fat man. “Let me out.”

“You have the case.” I held up the thumb drive I had palmed earlier. “I have what was *inside* the case.”

The fat man screamed in rage, flopping around in a pond of gasoline, his neck extending from under the Ferrari like some enraged turtle. “Hey, smart guy!” He had somehow managed to get one hand free and was holding the shiny, gold cigarette lighter over the pool of gas.

“Don’t!”

The fat man’s hand shook. “Come die with me, boychick!”

I slammed the hydraulics just as he flicked the lighter, the Ferrari crashing down on him before the gas could ignite, squashing the fat man with a loud, moist POP. Blood mingled with the gasoline, sent rainbows swirling across the floor. I had to turn away.

I dabbed at the spots on my shirt with my fingertips. I didn’t feel so good, but I felt better than the fat man.

The fat man’s organization was going to be coming after me. Not like they would be crying in their vodka over what had happened to him, but still, they couldn’t allow some freelancer like me to step on the big boss man. That’s okay. Nothing like people wanting to kill you to make you appreciate a slow sunrise, a fast car, or a fresh cup of coffee. The fat man’s organization was the least of my problems, though; it was Jane that I was worried about.

I slipped the thumb drive into my pocket and started for the

door, wincing with every step. The coded bank numbers weren’t going to do me any good but they were going to bring Jane running. Her, or the next guy she had lined up to play fetch. Didn’t matter. I opened the door, stepped out into the cool night air and kept walking. Yeah, I might be looking over my shoulder, but Jane better keep an eye on her rearview mirror, too. Plain Jane or beautiful Jane, whichever one I met next, she’s going to find out who her *new* daddy is.

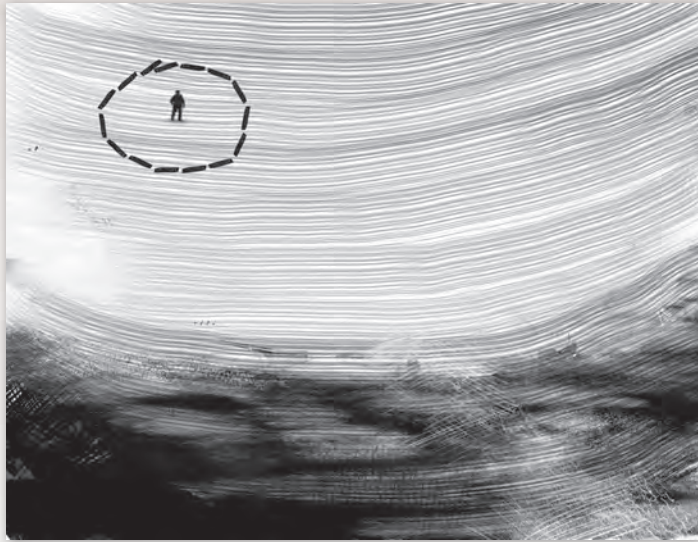


Non-Fiction

The following chapter and essay were part of Agent Nightingale's dossier. It appears that while his recent visit to Bright Falls was the first time he had actually set foot there, in fact, he had been investigating the small town for some time. Whether it was persistent and recurring dreams that led him to the town, as they did myself, or whether his research was part of a more formal investigation by the FBI, I have only hints and suppositions.

The dossier itself is equally puzzling. One can only surmise Nightingale's rationale for including an account of the treatment options at a Bright Falls clinic specializing in the care of artists and a litany of bizarre local events dating back more than a hundred years. What I do know was that Nightingale's dossier was not a capricious collection of unrelated data but the work of a trained law officer. Though emotionally unstable, Nightingale was a meticulous researcher, a man desperate to discover the dark secret of this town, a secret he feared was about to metastasize, a secret inextricably tied to Alan Wake.

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OPPOSITE: The Bright Falls Library and local bookstore were invaluable resources in the creation of this book.



The Creator's Dilemma

by Dr. Emil Hartman

Dr. Emil Hartman's *The Creator's Dilemma* was an unusual publication in that while it targeted a mass-audience with its promises of creative growth and renewal, it was underpinned by vaguely cosmic theories relating to the powers of artists. His insistent caveat that one could only hope to benefit from these methods by becoming a "guest" at the Cauldron Lake Lodge suggests, in this editor's opinion, that he was motivated by an ulterior agenda. Whether it be financial or another, darker purpose remains difficult to assess.

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 ABOVE: Chester Decat's "The Sublime Secret" resides in Dr. Hartman's private collection at the Cauldron Lake Lodge.

Preface

The Instruments of Creation

Art is not merely an imitation of the reality of nature, but in truth a metaphysical supplement to the reality of nature.

— Friedrich Nietzsche

The artist is a chimerical, contradictory figure: revered and despised, worshipped and persecuted. He has been called shaman, trickster, priest, madman, blasphemer, and fool. Sometimes he has been all these things at once. We sense, somehow, that the greatest artists are possessed by a vision that is beyond their ken. They venture to places the rest of us would not dare. They risk everything in pursuit of their goal. They bring back treasures, and occasionally they unearth objects that should have been left buried.

It is in the course of their adventures, however, that these heroes of desire are occasionally injured or, as is so often the case, they injure those closest to them. Such are the occupational hazards of the creative craft and it is to these problems that I dedicate the following pages.

Thirty-five years ago, I began my training as a garden variety psychotherapist at Tollund Memorial Hospital in Vermont. I administered daily relief with a kind smile and a handful of pharmaceuticals. While these encapsulated therapies had their place, for they pacified and calmed so many of these troubled souls, they did not allow our patients to overcome their various psychological challenges. They often withdrew and became lost inside themselves. I had certain patients in my care who

exhibited signs of artistic ability. Their works were not refined or sophisticated, they had rudimentary technique, and they were utterly ignorant of the prevailing aesthetic trends of their day, but they were possessed by some burning desire for self-expression. The work was often raw, brutal, and ugly, but always arresting in its ferocity and starkness. These were individuals producing what we now know of as “outsider art.” I left this small hospital some years later but the image of these damaged souls carving their dreams into canvas and clay stayed with me.

I went west and eventually settled into private practice in Washington State. Here, I found that while many of my patients were far more functional than those at Tollund Memorial, they were often afflicted by some of the same problems. In them, I saw this same urgent desire for self-expression — of problems, hopes, disappointments, desires — coupled with an inability to express these things that were most important to them. They could talk about their problems, certainly, but they could not reify their internal life and so create some form of accommodation between what was so essential and pure inside them and what was so often felt to be the drab and mundane reality of their external world.

We encounter here, as we will again and again, The Creator’s Dilemma.

Dreams That Wake Monsters

The artist’s voice sings as though he summoned the powers of the oceans and ether. However at times, these energies can become blocked. The artist may think the well has gone dry and so he finds another outlet for his creative energies, predictably descending down the familiar trajectory of depression, alcohol, and other forms of self-abuse.

Many years ago I had a patient who worked under the pen

name of Philip Musil. He was a talented playwright, attractive and socially adept, and he had produced some notable dramatic works for many years, until he hit what he often referred to as “the glass wall.” This glass wall, as he saw it, was the end of his writing career. Through the wall he could see his potential future of creative production, but now it seemed like it belonged to someone else. Day after day he would batter himself against it, injuring himself in the process, but to no avail. The words that had come so easily to him in the past had ceased. He might have had the occasional idea for a play, but when he attempted to write it down, all he saw on the page were the broken fragments of other writers’ dreams. His own ideas no longer had the power to seize his imagination and carry him through the all-important first drafts of his fiction. This went on for a year before I met him.

He joined us here at the Lodge several years ago, which he admitted felt more like an artists’ retreat than the psychiatric institution he had imagined. He was a very difficult case and for the first six months was unable to produce any usable work. For a period, he even began exhibiting certain indications of cognitive slippage and delusional disorder. This worried his family, who began to feel he should be brought home. After a troubling visit in which he did not recognize his mother and sister, he was returned home, though his symptoms worsened.

He would go on long night walks and return home injured but unable to explain why. He would conduct conversations with animals and trees. These bizarre behaviors went beyond their ability to understand or help him, falling squarely into what Karl Jaspers once called the “doctrine of the abyss.”

Philip was returned to us some months later and, after a brief course of neuroleptic therapy, he soon began recovering, returning to more predictable patterns of ideation and behavior. We worked

through this period with a combination of pharmaceutical encouragement and what I have come to call Engagement Therapy™, and its sister method, The Flow™.

It wasn't easy, but we persisted, and Philip began producing some amazingly imaginative work. It was a thrilling time for Philip and all of us at the Lodge.

Lives were changed during this period.

He stayed with us for two years, eventually producing his six-hour opus, *Nightfalls*. While no one would consider this flawed work a masterpiece, it restarted his career and allowed him to get beyond the glass wall.

Of course, it would be disingenuous for me to suggest that all psychological and creative problems are solvable. At times, there are those who are beyond help. One of my greatest professional disappointments was the now famous case of Daniel Sanders, the monumental sculptor from Oregon. His storied career was only six years long, and in that time he had produced six immortal sculptures. These were highly sought after pieces both for their rarity and the fact that each of the six had been quickly purchased for undisclosed amounts by institutions and collectors in such far-flung locales as London, Rome, and Kyoto, all places where he was regarded as an American master.

A methodical worker by nature, he would rise each morning at five and walk directly to his studio in a little wooden cottage behind his home.

On the day in question, he was to begin his seventh work.

A three-ton cube of rough white limestone had been delivered to his studio the previous evening and it stood there like a solemn mourner, awaiting its transformation. He had assayed and quarried the block a fortnight before and had had numerous

visions of how he would shape the alabaster surface of the stone: he saw dancing children, prisoners in cages, piles of dying dogs, the gentle faces of long-dead lovers, fantastical sea creatures, and obese copulating couples entwined around each other.

The limestone block could have become any of these things, but this morning, when he went into his studio and picked up his chisel, he found himself faced with his end. The images he had imagined beneath its surface faded away and he saw only a three-ton cube of limestone staring back at him like a bemused stranger. He persisted and told himself that this was a white-hot box of potential and possibility that stood before him — he had only to strike it and realize his vision. But instead he sat down and stared at the block. He walked around it, slapped it for good measure, but inevitably returned to his stool. He sat there for an immeasurable time.

Three days later, he was found on the floor by his neighbor, still staring at the white stone. He had shat his trousers and reduced himself to a dehydrated and wasted state by the time the EMTs were called.

He lay on his side, perfectly still, perfectly conscious, still staring at the white block.

He was brought to us by relatives, and I worked intensely with him for a period of three months, but to no avail. We used charcoal to draw figures on the stone and encouraged him to cut it. We tried a battery of drugs and hypnotherapeutic methods, cyclical psychodynamics and integrative approaches, phenomenological methods, electroconvulsive therapy, sensory deprivation, daily multitheoretical psychotherapeutic counseling, and tough love.

Finally, I threatened to destroy the thing — explode it into a million shards — fearing it had become some psychic anchor around his neck, but he howled like an animal and swore it would

be as though I were killing him. He had become psychically bound to this object.

We ceased all therapy at this point and he was isolated in his own wing. He was allowed visitors but chose to live a solitary existence.

After a month, ideas began to return to him.

He saw ocean waves, trees, dark clouds, ravenous birds, and a secret country to which he might travel, but only through the stone.

He had become convinced that this project would be his masterwork, that this stone was his door into that secret country where his future now lay. He saw the image of what he would create so precisely, but feared that it was so complex he did not have the skill to execute it. Paralyzed by his perfectionism, the vision he held became an *idée fixe* that returned him to his apparent stupor as he awaited the precise and perfect moment for the first strike.

The pharmaceuticals had no effect, the therapies did not work, and I am sad to say that Mr. Sanders remains with us at the Lodge, sharing his basement room with his white monolith, transfixed by the vision of this door to a secret country.

Again, as before, we see The Creator's Dilemma.

I continue to hope that we will break through to Daniel using a long-range therapeutic approach I am currently developing at the Cauldron Lake Lodge. His case may indeed lead to the final fruition and perfection of my two patented therapeutic methods.

Engagement Therapy™ and The Flow™

I hope this book will serve as an introduction to Engagement Therapy™ and its sister method, The Flow™. I would like to caution, however, that this humble tome cannot replace actual

treatment with an accredited therapist from our Lodge. The unfortunate truth is that these therapies cannot in fact be captured in a book any more than you can learn dancing or swimming from a book. Creativity is like the deepest of lakes and this book will only skim atop its glassy surface. To dive deep into that vast lake of your own creativity, to venture to places you barely suspected inside yourself, I encourage you to contact us here at the Cauldron Lake Lodge.

That said, I will show you, the artist, a rough sketch of how to break free of the resistances, conflicts, and blockages that have stalled your creative maturation using Engagement Therapy™ and its companion method, The Flow™. The problems of the working artist are manifold and can involve:

- i. Complete Blockage
- ii. Obsessive Perfectionism
- iii. Creative and Technical Plateaus
- iv. Libidinal Inversion and Negative Sublimation
- v. Rigid Thinking
- vi. Insomnia
- vii. Distraction and Unfocused Attention
- viii. Detachment and Disengagement
- ix. Cathexis and Anticathexis
- x. Creative Impasse
- xi. Anxiety and Ideational Hysteria
- xii. Traumatic Mnemic Traces
- xiii. Defusion of Instincts
- xiv. Identity Failure

These are but a sample of the problems I have worked on with our guests at the Cauldron Lake Lodge. Through intensive

sessions of Engagement Therapy™ and its companion method, The Flow™, you will involve yourself in exercises that force you to confront the sleeping monsters inside yourself, but that also deliver you to creative heights you had never imagined. We will till the soil and work to remove those psychic impedimenta that have found their way into your process. Through Engagement Therapy™ and The Flow™, we work to build the channels of communication between your subconscious, your waking consciousness, and your higher consciousness. Your newly integrated mind will allow you to finally take control of your life so that you can live in a waking dream and externalize your deepest aspirations.

This heightened state will lead to greater mental clarity and increased creativity, well-being, and happiness. The bygone cliché of the depressed and impoverished artist should be cast aside as a relic of nineteenth century romanticism. You can live the happy and creative life you had always hoped for — you only need to release your greater yourself.

Liberation from the Self

My approach focuses not on the goal- or task-oriented practices of the recent faddish therapies. There is no twelve-step, no plan, no formula that can be applied to any and all. Herein lies the importance of joining us here at the Lodge. Our practice relies on a very basic suspicion that has been held by artists since time immemorial. I have worked with writers, sculptors, photographers, architects, game designers, musicians, jewelers, weavers, videographers, and conceptual artists. When I ask them to tell me about the most creative period of their lives, or a work that they are particularly proud of, a hushed silence falls upon them and they tell me their secret.

They admit that they are imposters.

They tell me they are fakes.

They concede that they did not write or sculpt or compose their greatest work, but they were simply the instrument of a larger creative force — an author who took possession of their bodies and minds to create their greatest works.

It came easily and as if by no effort of their own.

They will say to me with the greatest reverence and sometimes with tears in their pitiable eyes: it did not come *from* me, it came *through* me.

We take that approach to heart at the Cauldron Lake Lodge, where the heavenly vistas of the Pacific Northwest and the deep waters of the lake from which we take our name serve as sources of inspiration to our guests.

As Mallarme once wrote, “the poet disappears (this is absolutely the discovery of our time)” and indeed, these techniques will encourage you as the artist to fade into the background of your art so that your mind and body are but instruments in its creation.

There are great and powerful forces at work around us, unimaginably strong, but they can be harnessed through intellect and courage. Like a raging river, they can be channeled, dammed, and released at will. We at the Lodge can show you how to broker a move away from egocentric art and toward a grander form of expression — one in which the work stands before the artist and the world is transformed as a consequence of your creative acts.

Creatio Ex Nihilo

I have spent some time discussing the tenet that the artist must disappear in order to create, but let me encourage some cognitive dissonance for a moment with a contradictory idea, and it is

the core problem I will discuss in this book. It is what classical theologians and philosophers have discussed through the rubric of *creatio ex nihilo* (creation from nothing), or what I have variously referred to as The Creator's Dilemma, the God Problem, as it were.

Let us leave the theological questions behind us for the moment and consider this experience, this fleeting moment, in which a writer like Philip faces a blank page, or when Daniel looks upon his white monster.

I would like you to put yourself into that trembling silence a dancer feels in the penultimate moment before she launches her body upon the brightly lit stage.

The artist understands that in this fragile quantum of time and space, anything can happen. Moreover, in this moment, which my patients have described as “magical” and “electrical” and “otherworldly,” there is the possibility that one can create, like a god, something from nothing.

But it is also in this moment that a little thought may creep in and whisper: no, what has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. You cannot possibly delight, instruct, inspire, or surprise your audience. Your words, your hands, your deeds are dead. You cannot create something from nothing, you are not a god, you are but a mortal.

If allowed to grow, as it so often does, this seed of doubt can destroy a creative life.

I firmly hold the belief that artists are gods. Perhaps gods of lesser universes, but divine authors all the same.

They create something from nothing: *creatio ex nihilo*.

Engagement Therapy™ and The Flow™ will be your pathway to working daily as a creator of your own universe. Trust me with

your creative recovery and we will build something grand and beautiful together.

At the Cauldron Lake Lodge, The Creator's Dilemma is *our* dilemma. Now let's begin, shall we?



Bright Falls: A History

The following article is taken from a larger work, *Bright Falls: A History*, edited by Conrad Breaker. Copies of the book can be easily located at the town's library or book store, but this chapter was found among Agent Nightingale's effects, cut from the book with a razor. When contrasting the content of this chapter to the rest of the fairly benign book, it's easy to see why it appealed to Nightingale.

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 ABOVE: Flying objects and their strange fates loom large in Bright Falls lore.

A History of Oddities in Bright Falls

By James Alvord

For residents of Bright Falls, a sleepy town of only a few hundred, strange events that may seem like an aberration in most communities of its size have become commonplace. Research into multiple Pacific Northwest news archives has revealed that the area has actually been something of a hotbed of tall tales and paranormal rumors since at least the 1850s.

Some stories predate official statehood for Washington, when Bright Falls was a mountain community of native tribes mingled with white American fur trappers and hunters who had ventured west into the Washington Territory.

Bigfoot, Of Course

One furry creature that was never successfully trapped is the Sasquatch, the Lummi tribal name for Bigfoot. Reports of sightings, alleged foot tracks, and an abundance of unexplained sounds abound in the forested area near Cauldron Lake. Lummi tribal legends include stories of a large, ape-like creature that go back several centuries, and printed accounts date back to the first days of journalism in the Northwest.

One such early account involved "Mountain Mike" Callahan, a native of Missouri who had been trapping in the Oregon and Washington Territories for decades. Considered a stable, unflappable man who had seen everything in the woods, he presented himself to his acquaintances as a true adopted son of the forest, clad in buckskin, with his trademark beaver-fur hat.

In 1857, however, Callahan had been camped on the shores of Cauldron Lake when locals reported a bizarre animal bellowing sound echoing across the lake, followed by sustained human

screaming. Bright Falls residents spoke of seeing Callahan, dressed only in his red flannel union suit, running barefoot through the town, his eyes wild with fright.

Callahan was found two miles outside of town the next day, eyes wide open, shivering, his formerly dark brown mane of hair now completely white.

Callahan never spoke again, so it is impossible to know for certain what he saw and heard. He died nine months later in the Olympia Asylum for the Afflicted. Bright Falls residents, however, formed the opinion that the incident must have involved an up-close encounter with the Sasquatch.

Modern day sightings of Bigfoot-like creatures are numerous, particularly in the mountainous areas of Washington State. An Internet database of reported sightings by state, for example, lists the number for California in the twenties, and a similar result for the state of Oregon. Washington, however, lists more than seven hundred. A great number of the auditory “sightings,” strange sounds that are not from any known human or animal source, have occurred in the vicinity of Cauldron Lake.

A Dark Cloud

Sasquatch is not the only legendary creature rumored to reside in the area. Everyone has heard of the Loch Ness monster, but fewer people know of our own shadow beast of Cauldron Lake. It has never gained a catchier name than that, because people have never agreed on just what it is. What exists in local legend is a string of similar rumors that may or may not be related.

One of these legends traces back to 1977, when a young couple engaged in amorous pursuits near the shore of the lake was surprised by what appeared to be an inky dark cloud that floated in the air above the water. This was accompanied by

instant storm-like conditions, though the sky above them was clear and starry. The names of both people were withheld in the press coverage at the time, as they were underage, and there was a possible investigation into misdemeanor activity ongoing. But there were anonymous quotations from both witnesses that described snake-like tendrils emerging from the cloud and an unearthly shrieking sound accompanying the storm sounds that emerged from the floating shape. It was enough to send two half-clad teenagers running away from their clandestine sanctuary and toward their homes.

Whether snake-like extensions are related to stories in the 1800s about flying serpents in Utah and other parts of the western United States territories is unknown. But it does connect with several other accounts of dark airborne events that have been sighted in significant numbers since the mid-1970s.

Another particular sighting serves to underscore the contrast and consequent lack of agreement on the legend. In 1975, Ingrid Peterson reported a dark brontosaurus-shaped creature arising from the lake, its neck extending forty feet above a massive torso. She could not describe detailed features, such as eyes or teeth in the creature, but swears that it had a tangible, fleshy form beyond the nebulous objects described by other witnesses. The consistent thread is that this, too, seemed as though it were made from darkness itself, a darkness so intense that the contrast can be seen even at night. Peterson’s account was largely dismissed, however, because of her history of alcoholism.

The Feathered Serpent

Other accounts of a lake creature are demonstrably inaccurate. For a few years around 1978-79, it was referred to as *Quetzalcoatl*, or the feathered serpent of ancient Aztec legend. Local native



tribes made a public protest of this ignorance. Chilluckittequaw Chief Thomas Deerchaser was quoted as saying, “Not only is that a southwest and Mexican thing, but the Quetzalcoatl isn’t even a monster. It’s an Aztec deity. It’s a sky god. It’s not supposed to be some scary thing. We got plenty of scary stuff to talk about up here in the Northwest without resorting to that. Some people are plain ignorant.”

When asked to elaborate on the “scary stuff” that is more local, Chief Deerchaser referred to the Sasquatch, the flying snakes, and the “spirit-touched” state young men went into as part of a life passage. “But we don’t really believe in any of that,

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 ABOVE: From the collection of one Emmet Snyder, an amateur birder who would only go on the record to say that these ravenous, nocturnal birds were “a local species.”



except the last one,” he said. “Rites of passage are scary enough. Ghost stories and monster stories are just for entertainment.” He further noted that “if you want stories about sea creatures, you should talk to the Quinault tribe down by the coast in Tahola. They’re full of that stuff. But if you want dark creatures from the lake, I’ve got nothin’.”

Shadows Everywhere

Beyond the shores of the lake, other sightings of smaller dark creatures go further to confuse the myth. Shadow dogs, dark humanoid shapes, black bird-like creatures, even dark versions of plant life enter into the mix of legends. The strangeness even

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 ABOVE: A local artist’s rendering of the “shadow men” she saw.



extends to inanimate objects: rusted cars found in treetops, waterlogged boats in the middle of the woods, too far from the lake to be carried there by humans. There are so many possibilities that it is impossible to nail down one creature, or even type of creature, that occasionally terrorizes this small town.

Officials in law enforcement have traditionally been silent on the issue, but we were able to get an off-the-record quote from one officer on condition of anonymity. “We think the stories are bunk,” the officer said, “but ghost stories have their uses, you

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 ABOVE: An artist’s conception of a man wrapped in shadows, reportedly seen in the vicinity of the Bright Falls dam in the days before Deerfest.

know? In my line of work, anything that keeps the kids from getting into trouble at night is a good thing.”

Lights in the Sky

Paranormal activities and other strange events have not been limited to creature sightings. In 1901, before the invention of the airplane, and before the widespread introduction of electricity to Bright Falls, residents reported a series of incidents involving hovering lights just above the trees. The sightings occurred on four separate nights through the summer of that year, with each incident reported by multiple people.

One resident, Tobias Crane, created an oil painting of the scene decades later from his childhood memories. The painting, called “Floating Lights over Cauldron Lake,” now resides in the private collection of Dr. Emil Hartman. It depicts children by the shores of the lake pointing skyward, while strange lights illuminate the water’s surface. Dr. Hartman’s collection, while not on public display, is reputed to be one of the largest gatherings of art depicting bizarre, unnatural phenomena.

It is unknown whether these strange lights are related to the more recent rumors of illuminated messages found in the nooks and crannies around Bright Falls. None have ever been photographed, but multiple reports from disparate sources certainly point to a trend. Local law enforcement seemed less enthusiastic about these reports. “We’ve never caught anybody at it,” said our same anonymous source, “but you can bet that if we do, we’ll give these kids a little talking to. We’ve got our eye out for any kind of mischief.”

A survey of local teens produced blanket denials of vandalism, along with several shaky reports of sightings. “There were messages,” said one young woman. “I haven’t seen them myself,



but my boyfriend's cousin did and so has one of my sister's friends. All different messages, too. Strange things, like, 'Walk in Light' and these odd symbols and arrows. Stuff like that."

Despite the lack of photographic evidence, a few artists' renderings of the strange messages have been recreated with the assistance of the alleged witnesses. A common thread that gives the story some credibility is that all witnesses have described the symbol of a torch alongside the bizarre messages.

The Scratching Hag of Bright Falls

Some stories seem designed specifically to scare children. The legend of "Granny Claws," the scratching hag of Bright Falls, seems to be a perverse twisting of the traditional image of a kindly old grandmother who will welcome youngsters in for a plate of warm cookies.

Variations abound, but the core narrative mirrors that of Baba Yaga, an old woman who emerges from the forest at night, sometimes walking, sometimes flying on what appears to be a

.....
 ABOVE: An artist's conception of the glowing messages. I located this structure, but only the lower torch symbol was visible and appeared to have been rendered with regular paint.

stone dish of some sort.

The rumor is that she eats children, a detail of the story that resurfaces every time a child is reported lost. Her home, which has never been seen (much less photographed) by current town residents, is somewhere deep in the forest and is said to stand on giant chicken legs. This allows the house itself to change locations at will, making it impossible to determine a single location in the forest for her residence.

There are disagreements about her physical appearance, perhaps due to her penchant for darkness, but the various versions all speak of unnaturally wide-open eyes and extended claw-like nails from her withered old hands. If the weird eyes and claws weren't enough, she is said to carry an extra darkness around her, making nights even darker.

Not many people believe this legend. Whereas the other paranormal phenomena all have their true believers, this story is primarily perpetuated by parents who want to keep their children safe from the true dangers of the forest. It is also shared among children themselves who love a good ghost story and, as a result, the details appear to have been changed and wildly elaborated over the years.

A Very Attached Couple

Other oddities have been attributed to paranormal causes in the area. In 1957, Vern and Norma Bergdale, long-time Bright Falls residents who were married for 43 years, died almost simultaneously on the opposite sides of town, both of apparent natural causes. Newspaper accounts at the time noted that their dual passing was evidence that they "truly shared a soul." Private letters from local archives, however, made reference to an "unsavory bargain" Vern Bergdale had made and that "strange

forces” were involved with their passing.

A rumor that was never confirmed, as only one eyewitness was present with Norma Bergdale at the time of her death, was that she seemed to exhale a small black cloud before she collapsed and died. The witness, Betsy Segerstrom, thought it very odd, because Norma didn’t smoke and there was no odor that would explain the dark, somehow metallic puff. “My friends have always told me that I imagined it,” Segerstrom insisted, “but I have no imagination. I saw what I saw.”

The Curious Case of Mr. August

The most recent and well-documented oddity to have occurred in Bright Falls was the case of Clark August III, the music industry entrepreneur made even more famous by the documentary film “The August Year,” by legendary German filmmaker Klaus Sankt.

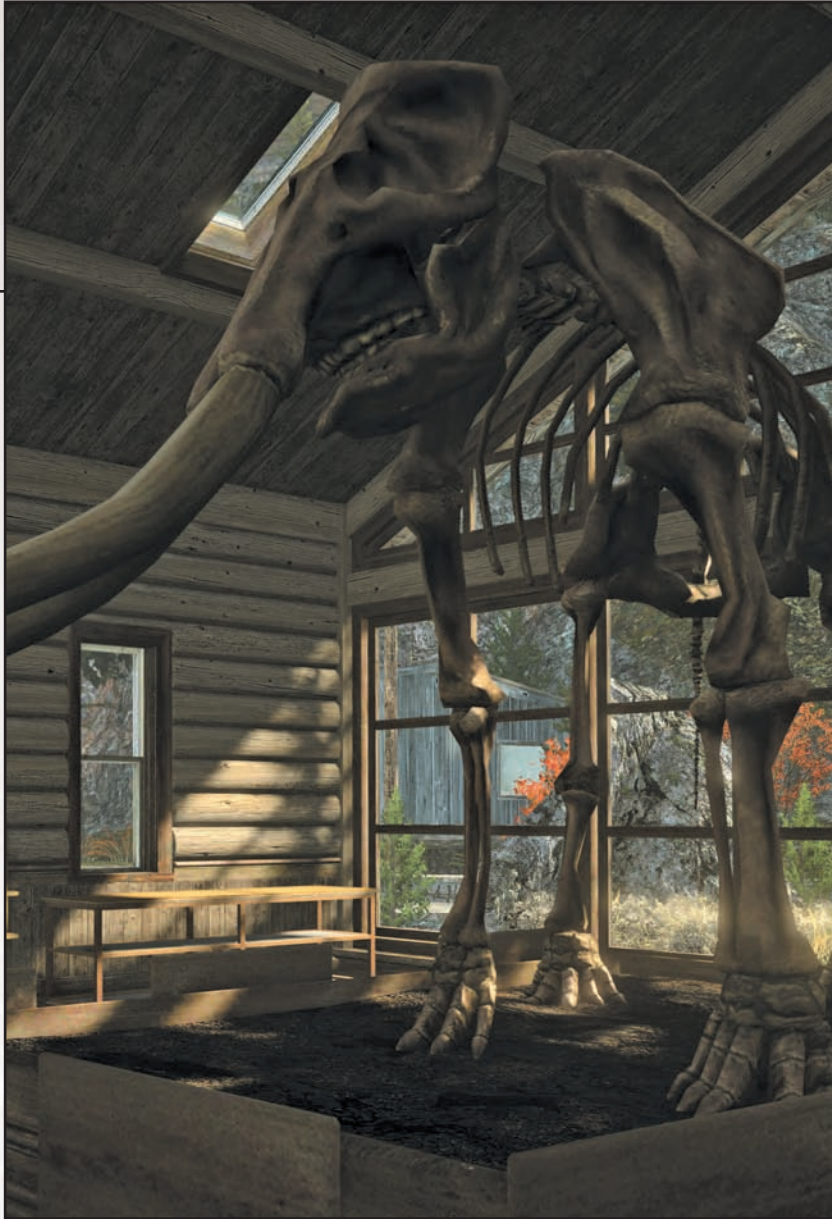
Footage of August early in the film revealed an almost comical portrait of an eccentric man in a dirty business suit playing a game of survival in the forests outside of Bright Falls. Surely, people thought, this would be a short-lived experiment. But as winter drew near, it became apparent that what had appeared to be comedy was in fact a deadly earnest matter.

People in Bright Falls today still argue over which part was most extraordinary: the fact that August miraculously survived the winter in near-perfect health, or the fact that he disappeared shortly afterward. All sorts of theories have accompanied his disappearance, some of them coupled with theories of his initial survival. Was there a bargain that helped him through the winter, only to have payment exacted in the spring? Alien abduction and dark spiritual forces have also been raised as possibilities. The unexplained howling sounds, the “noontime eclipse” fog, and the forest micro-tornadoes that appeared early in that season

have all served to fuel the rumors of an unnatural ending to August’s life.

Sheriff Sarah Breaker was flummoxed by this forensic anomaly. “This is not like any missing persons case I’ve ever seen,” she said. “If he froze, if he got killed by a wild animal, if he drowned, there would be physical evidence. There’s nothing.”

Even Sankt, who has researched the details of this case more than anyone, is at a loss. “It’s such an unexpected twist,” he was quoted as saying. “You think you’re at the end of a strange story, and then it has this incredible dénouement that throws everybody. We don’t even have answers to the main part of the story, which is what happened that winter. And now, we may never know what followed. It’s difficult to get an explanation from someone who has vanished off the face of the earth.”



Exhibits

The clippings in this section represent an array of artifacts spanning decades and ranging from obvious choices — those directly about Wake — to more obscure ones. It's clear why Nightingale would want an article about Wake's criminal past. But why, for example, would he be interested in a woman who drowned thirty years earlier, with no apparent connection to Wake? And why note a natural disaster report roughly a week after her death. Did he suspect a link between the two?

It's possible that there was a connection to some of the events only hinted at in Agent Nightingale's notes. Or possibly, he felt a need to put together a comprehensive portrait of the town he was studying, as though Bright Falls were as important a "person of interest" as Alan Wake.

The true prizes, however, are the photographs of Diver's Isle. The interest for Nightingale is obvious. The origin of the photographs, however, is a complete mystery. Much of Nightingale's motivation with these pieces may remain an enigma, but publishing these as part of the comprehensive collection may light the pathway for one whose torch burns brighter than mine.

.....
OPPOSITE: The famous "Buck-Toothed Charlie" at the Elderwood Visitor Center. One local insisted that the mammoth itself had come alive and rampaged through the center on the night of the destruction.

The Bright Falls Record

Page A1 / Monday, July 20, 1970

VOLCANIC QUAKE SINKS ISLAND, DAMAGES POWER PLANT

By Cynthia Weaver, Special to the Bright Falls Record

On the morning of July 18, a severe volcano-related earthquake caused significant damage to the power plant run by Bright Falls Light and Power, as well as many homes in the area. Seismic monitoring equipment at the U.S. Army research base nearby measured the quake at 7.3 on the Richter scale.

The epicenter is believed to be directly beneath Cauldron Lake. The most spectacular consequence of the quake is that Diver's Isle, which once sat in the middle of the lake, has now been completely submerged.

One of the deepest caldera lakes in the Cascade mountains, Cauldron Lake is no stranger

to seismic activity. This quake, however, is believed to be the most severe in the area in the twentieth century.

While some area homes were damaged, very few were considered catastrophic, and there were no injuries. Sten Faerch, a structural engineer and resident of Bright Falls, explained that "Most of the houses are made from logs or they're otherwise wood-framed. That gives a certain flexibility that you don't get in more rigid structures. Brick houses might keep the big bad wolf out, but they're not so good in an earthquake. Those [expletive] just crumble like a [expletive] house of cards."

The town of Bright Falls was without power for approximately

24 hours. Several of the turbines at the power plant remain damaged, but three of them are now operational. "We've got enough hydro power for the immediate area," said C.J. Chapman, a spokesman for Bright Falls Light and Power. "We're just not exporting any outside our area, and that's a big source of our income. We'll all be glad when the structure checks out and we can get all the turbines up and running. To be perfectly frank, we're bleeding money here."

The scene at Cauldron Lake has drawn a significant crowd of local bystanders. "It's so strange, Diver's Isle being just gone like that," said Carol Troup, a long-time area resident. "I used to swim there as a kid. We all did. We'd sunbathe on the rocks, and then dive off of the edges. It was so deep, even

right next to the island, so it was safe to go in head-first. And there was a cabin in the middle, though I don't think it belonged to anybody. I never remember going in it. Funny, because you'd think we would."

Carl Stucky, a local high school student, described his shock at seeing the island gone. "It's weird to see all of these people around the lake, talking and pointing at the empty water. I guess if you weren't from around here, you'd wonder what we were all pointing at. Diver's Isle lives on in our memories. And somewhere under the water, of course."

No photographs of the island could be located for this story.

Some citizens have expressed concern because of the volcanic aspect of the quake, but local officials have been quick to

CONTINUED A2

.....
 ABOVE: The newspaper clipping above was unceremoniously razored from a Bright Falls Library archive copy of the local paper.

FROM A1

reassure the populace. "There won't be any rivers of lava heading your way," said Sheriff Stephen Deming. "We've checked with the Army seismic station and the science guys at the University of Washington, and they've assured us that the eruption wasn't that kind. Sometimes volcanic structures just collapse on themselves. The red-hot stuff is pretty dramatic, but often most of the action is underground."

The town remains on alert for aftershocks, however, which

are common after a quake of this magnitude. But in general, life goes on as normal.

"We have quakes here all the time," said Stucky. "This one was just different because of the island. And it was a little bigger."

"It's not like anyone died," commented Troup. "I had some broken dishes, and some of the food spoiled when the fridge warmed up. That's about it."



*Hair by
Tammy*

The Bright Falls Record Page C7 / Saturday, July 11, 1970

**Barbara Jagger, a "beacon of light,"
1945-1970**

Barbara Jagger, long-time resident of Bright Falls, died on July 10, an apparent drowning in Cauldron Lake. She was 25 years old.

She had no immediate family in the area, but is survived by her companion, Thomas Zane.

Jagger was a renowned beauty, and the three-time winner of the Miss Deerfest pageant. "She was such a pretty girl," said Joy Miller, a friend and classmate since elementary school. "But she never used it to her advantage. She was humble and kind to everyone."

Part of the mystery of her



death is that she was a very capable swimmer. There was no evidence of foul play, however, and no investigation of the death is planned

by local law enforcement.

Friends in Bright Falls remember Jagger as a warm, maternal presence, though she was a relatively young woman and never had children of her own. Her home-baked muffins at community events were famous. "She didn't have bake sales, she had bake give-aways," one friend noted. "Her generosity was amazing. She just warmed everyone around her. Wherever Barbara was, you felt at home."

.....
ABOVE: The obituary for Barbara Jagger is a bit of an anomaly among Nightingale's effects. The interest it might have carried for him is unclear.

CRIME AUTHOR HAS OWN POLICE INTRIGUE

By Chris McGurk
THE NEW YORK TATTLER

Alan Wake, the author of the newly minted crime thriller **The Sudden Stop**, provided some thrills of his own Friday night. A warrant has been issued for his arrest after an alleged assault on *Gazette* photographer **Peter Villadsen**, which includes the charge of leaving the scene of a crime.

According to Villadsen, Wake “drove the camera into my freakin’ eye” with a closed fist while Villadsen attempted to take a picture after a gala cocktail party to celebrate the publication of the book. “I was taking a picture, no harm,” said Villadsen. “That’s what photographers do. He should know. His own wife is a photographer.”

Photographer **Alice Wake** was apparently not at the scene of the incident. She was reached by telephone later, but refused comment. Her exhibit, **Inflammatory**, opens at the Babeuf Gallery in

Chelsea on March 21st.

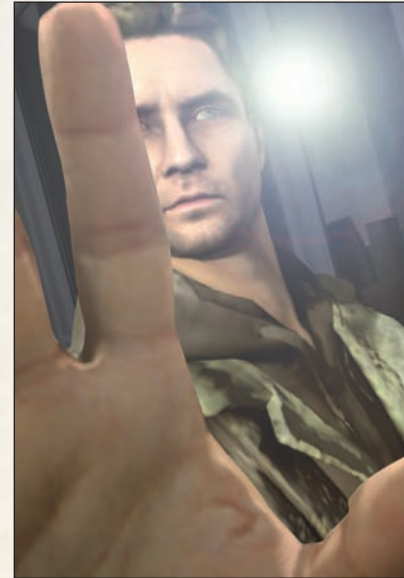
Wake was no longer at the scene when the police arrived. NYPD issued the warrant on charges of assault and battery.

“He got out of there, fast, right after it happened,” Villadsen said. “He yells at me, something like, *party’s over, moron*, and he slams the thing right into my eye. He didn’t have to yell.”

Villadsen posed for reporters while being questioned by the police, pointing to an unquestionably ugly and swollen bruise surrounding his eye socket.

Wake’s representative, **Barry Wheeler**, issued a statement this morning on Wake’s behalf and answered some questions posed to him by reporters shortly afterward.

The statement read: “Alan Wake regrets the misunderstanding that occurred at the *The Sudden Stop* gala last night. He would like to reiterate his gratitude to, and appreciation for, all of his readers



By Peter Villadsen, GAZETTE

and trusts that they will enjoy reading *The Sudden Stop* as much as he enjoyed writing it. Such misunderstandings are common when the private activity of writing meets with the public activity of book promotion.”

When asked if Wake would turn himself in, Wheeler responded with some evasiveness: “Al’s a straight-up guy. He’ll do the right thing.” When pressed about what the “right thing” was, Wheeler replied, “It’s


unclear at this point who actually did the assaulting. A camera with an exploding flashbulb right in your face can be pretty shocking. I’ve almost had a heart attack because of some of your paparazzi pals before. I’m not saying Alan even touched the guy, but you’ve gotta understand. Might’ve been just a startled instinct.”

When asked if it was Wheeler himself who whisked Wake away after the incident, he had no comment. “It was him, all right,” Villadsen claimed. “The roly-poly guy. I was only half-blinded. It was definitely him.”

This is not Wake’s first brush with the law, according to public records, and battery in particular seems to be a trend. Minneapolis police arrested an Alan Wake with a similar description for public drunkenness and battery in 1998. Charges of disorderly conduct and battery were filed (though the battery charge was dropped) in West Hollywood a year later. Neither incident resulted in jail time.

THE NY TATTLER
JAN. 14 '06

ABOVE: This article appeared in the tabloid newspaper *The New York Tattler* and was likely acquired by Nightingale while in Bright Falls, lending credence to the theory that our agent had some support from the FBI while in Bright Falls.

BRIGHT FALLS SHERIFF DEPT. DEPUTY'S REPORT NARRATIVE		
<input type="checkbox"/> OFFICER'S REPORT ONLY <input type="checkbox"/> ARR/JUV.CON. <input type="checkbox"/> CRIME		
CFS#2007-143	Page 1 of 2	DR 07-6027HS
CODE SECTION AND DESCRIPTION 11-31, Domestic disturbance	DATE 08/01/07	TIME 0133
LOCATION OF INCIDENT (OR ADDRESS) 34 Redwood Place		
PERSONS INVOLVED Andrew Davis, Sara Davis	SUSPECT N/A	PROPERTY TAG 824A
REPORTING OFFICER Mulligan	APPROVED BY: 	

ORIGIN: The 9-1-1 distress call originated with Mrs. Janet Schorr of 28 Redwood Place, neighbor of Andrew and Sara Davis. Mrs. Schorr reported shouting and smashing sounds, including breaking glass.

INVESTIGATION: Officers responded to the distress call logged at 1:33 a.m. from Mrs. Schorr. Officers forced their way into the residence at 34 Redwood Pl. after repeated attempts to speak to the occupants were met with silence.

The house turned out to be unoccupied, but with major physical damage to the interior. Deputy Mulligan interviewed the caller, Mrs. Schorr, who insisted there had been no history of domestic violence at Davis residence. "Nice young couple." They hadn't informed any neighbors of travel plans, and after midnight is an unusual time to run errands, so the Davises are now considered missing persons, with a likelihood of foul play.

The physical evidence is puzzling: there was significant damage inside home, but it seemed to emanate from certain points in the room. The furniture in main room was smashed against perimeter, as though there was a centrifugal force in center, spinning everything outward. The lab is investigating a black soot-like substance found in small traces at the scene. No evidence of incendiary devices and no other suggestion of attempted arson.

The power outage at the house is another anomaly. No other houses in the neighborhood were affected.

Missing persons profile: Married couple, both white, early 30s, both medium builds. Wife "wears a lot of black," according to witness. Not sure of significance of remark. The husband worked in insurance, the wife had an Internet-based home business, according to neighbors. No known enemies. No dangerous habits. Both read a lot of mystery fiction, stayed at home, led quiet lives.

ARJIS-9A (REV 01-98) CONTINUED _____

.....
 ABOVE: An official police report of what remains a cold case in Bright Falls.

U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Washington, D.C. 20535

MR. CLAY STEWARD
 25 STATION STREET
 BRIGHT FALLS, WA

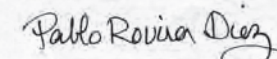
Request No.: FO2655656
 Subject: NIGHTINGALE, ROBERT

Dear Mr. Steward:

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request noted above.

We cannot furnish records related to Special Agent Nightingale as they remain classified due to the ongoing investigation of an unrelated matter. I can inform you, however, that Agent Nightingale is no longer employed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Over thirteen months ago, Agent Nightingale's partner was killed in the line of duty. The trauma related to this event triggered a severe mental breakdown and the subsequent substance-abuse problem you refer to in your correspondence. Our records indicate that he ventured to Bright Falls following his discharge from the Bureau, but we have no knowledge of and bear no responsibility for his activities there. Furthermore, we have no files relating to shadow men, lake creatures, ravenous crows, or any of the other bizarre supernatural fauna you describe. Bob Nightingale was a solid and dependable agent who was not able to overcome his tragic circumstances. His current whereabouts remain unknown.

Sincerely yours,



Pablo Rovira Diez, Section Chief
 Record/Information
 Dissemination Section
 Records Management Division

.....
 ABOVE: While my FOIA request did confirm that Nightingale was not on official business, one can only wonder what "the ongoing investigation of an unrelated matter" refers to.



A rare photograph of Diver's Isle, which is no longer visible in Cauldron Lake. The source of this photograph is unknown, but it is rare enough that the local newspaper could not locate one even as it documented the island's disappearance in the earthquake of 1970.

Of even more interest than the photograph itself is the curious dark image that dominates the upper-left corner. It could easily be a flock of birds, but the nebulous edges of the shape would betray a flock of the most unnatural kind. While not discounting the possibility of an imperfection on the film, the possibility that this could tie in with the many images of dark creatures in both Wake's fiction and Bright Falls legend cannot be ignored.



Another angle of Diver's Isle, with bridge access. This was the only way to get motor vehicles onto the island, as there has never been ferry service of any kind on Cauldron Lake. The bridge, like the island, is now completely gone.

A slightly less obvious shape than the previous photograph can be found in the water in the lower-right portion of the picture. While smaller than the dark flock seen in the previous photo, this manta ray-like shape of an unknown creature provides a greater likelihood that the image is not a photographic accident. Note that there is no raised object in the immediate area that could cast a shadow in such a shape. It remains unclear where Agent Nightingale found either of these pictures



Afterword

The preceding investigation was conducted at great personal cost. The night I discovered Bright Falls, I left my wife Anna and our newborn son Milo on a quest for a man who had appeared to me in a series of dreams. Anna never understood the importance of my visions, never appreciated that they had a significance that extended beyond our petty lives into the world beyond. Sometimes it felt as though she couldn't see anything beyond the laundry, the bills, the local news. I will admit that she considered my investigation to be, at best, the product of obsession, and at worst, a convenient way by which I could avoid the burdens of fatherhood.

In the interests of full disclosure, I will admit also that since I lost my job I had not been able to provide for my family in any meaningful sense. Anna and I were once in love, but we married young (I was 20, she was 19), and since our wedding day I had felt more and more estranged from her. I had become depressed and I wasn't much use around the house. Milo cried, he cried a lot. I would pick him up and try play father, but he would scream and bawl till I could hardly stand it. There's truth to what she said. But there's truth to what I found.

When I left for Bright Falls that night, I kissed my wife and boy for what I thought might be the last time, convinced that if I found what had appeared to me in my visions then I would perish the way I had

.....
OPPOSITE: Despite its obvious natural beauty, I left the town of Bright Falls with the feeling of so much unfinished business.

each night for months. Anna told me that if I returned, she and Milo would be gone and that I wouldn't be able to find them, that it was over between us. She begged me to stay, and as I walked out the door, she wished me dead.

The visions were real, but perhaps I was a poor vessel for them. I didn't choose to be pulled into these events. Something happened in Bright Falls in the weeks before the Deerfest of last year. Just look at the Elderwood Visitor Center, the strange number of disappearances, the walking wounded who speak in repeating sentences and can no longer venture into light, their photosensitivity so acute as to render a simple noontime stroll excruciating.

This was not a cover-up orchestrated by mighty governmental agencies or their outsourced minions but by silent and unanimous town consensus. No one will talk about it, and everyone concerned has chosen to go on with their lives as though they could bury their memories with their departed loved ones.

At the time of printing, I am still unaware of whether Alan Wake is dead, missing, or in hiding. There was one night when I was walking back to the Majestic on the Elderwood trail and I thought I saw a man that looked like Wake rounding a bend in the trail. I called out and started jogging, then running after him, and while he seemed to walk at a steady and even pace, I was never able to catch up. There was even a brief moment in which he looked back and I saw that it was him. He smiled at me as though he were letting me in on a big secret, just before rounding the bend. When I caught up, he had vanished.

Those closest to him have refused all requests for interviews, and I have only just recently persuaded his agent Barry Wheeler to drop his lawsuit. I stayed on in Bright Falls for weeks, even helped rebuild the devastation of the Elderwood Visitor Center caused by what some called "bad weather" and others referred to as "the worst kind of juju." Likewise, my attempts to locate Agent

Nightingale have been fruitless.

My dreams have stopped and I consider my part in this matter complete. Before leaving Bright Falls, I threw my dream journal into the lake and hopefully returned my visions to their source. I want no part of that life any more. By perhaps all measures, my search must be considered a failure. I've done my job and I consider this book my torch. I pass it on to one of you loyal readers, to continue the investigation and take it where I could not.

When I finally left Bright Falls and returned to Madison, I looked for Anna and Milo. The apartment was empty and Anna's family refused to answer my calls. They were gone and I was abandoned, alone. I searched for almost a year before finally making contact. I now work as an assistant in the basement of the university library, shelving books mostly, but occasionally fixing network problems and waking sleeping students at closing time. On those brief occasions when one of these students catches my eye, and they look away too quickly, or they are over-polite, I get the sense that they're afraid to catch what I have. Perhaps they look down at me with my anxious manner and ill-fitting clothes, convinced that I am one of life's forgotten and poor beyond pity. I let them look down, smug with the pride of my secret. See, they don't understand what I have. They don't know that when I finish work, my back sore and my feet as heavy as cinderblocks, that I catch a bus to the other side of town where I climb six floors to a small but well-kept apartment. They have no idea that when I open that door and see my beautiful wife and boy look up at me and smile, that I am awash in the light and warmth of a thousand suns. They don't understand that I have treasures beyond their imagining. That I am untouchable, alive, and that I walk in light.

— Clay Steward

