

Author's BAZAAR

ONLINE

May 2012 ■ No. 16



A WRITING EXERCISE...

Editor's note:

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

By Dean Rea, editor

A familiar narrative plot line was chosen as the theme for stories written for publication in this issue of *Author's Bazaar*, an online hobby journal.

The narrative was popular with elementary home school students that I taught more than a decade ago. They loved the assignment and let their imaginations run wild. Many of the “reluctant” writers were eager to join the fun.

The assignment: Write a story of 500 words or less using the following introduction: I thought I was the last person on Earth then heard a knock on the door.

How would you write the story? The key, of course, is to wait until the conclusion to reveal the origin of the knock on the door.

I trust that you will enjoy reading the stories that appear in this issue of *Author's Bazaar*.

Meanwhile, if you have written a fictional story, a non-fiction article, an essay or a poem and wish to see it published, send it to *Author's Bazaar*.



A blue ribbon surprise

By June T. Bassemir

I thought I was the last person on Earth until I heard a knock at the door, but when I called out, no one answered. It had been a frighteningly big storm of thunder and lightning that kept me shivering for most of the night, lying on the wooden floor under my heavy parka. I had taken shelter in the place last night when the storm clouds darkened the sky, and it looked very much like the weather forecaster's prediction was going to be right on target.

"The night is going to be a bad one to be caught in, and those camping should find a place wherever they can to ride out the storm," the forecaster said, and I did. It was Providence that just as the rain pellets began to fall, I saw the abandoned building in the clearing and made a beeline to the broken front door.

But now in the morning, I heard that noise a second time. Did someone see me come into the building? Was a homeless person hiding somewhere, maybe in another room?

As I thought about these questions the noise stopped. Then as the sunlight brightened and then penetrated through the dirty window pane, I heard it a third time. It wasn't my imagination, so I got up, slipped into my heavy L.L. Bean "Storm Chaser" shoes and moved from room to room.

The bare rooms that I saw in the evening were just as bare this morning except that in the living room where I slept, the remnants of a burned red candle had dripped over the mantel piece. Empty cans of McGinty's Beef Stew were strewn on the floor, and old newspapers littered the sides of the room.

Someone obviously had been there recently, but now there was nothing to indicate that anyone was in the house much less even knew that I was there. And yet there was that noise again. I followed the sound through the house to the kitchen where I found a hand pump used to supply water. The pump was rusty and long forgotten. On the wall was a 1927 calendar marked up with "x's" on the days that had gone by, and next to it was a picture of a Hoosier cabi-

net. Perhaps a woman who had lived there hoped to own it someday. Nothing else in the room or the rest of the house gave me a clue as to where the noise was coming from.

I felt a breeze and smelled an odor while standing near the window. Sure enough. There was my answer. Someone was peering in just outside the flapping curtain. She was hungry and wanted her breakfast, which someone apparently had forgotten to leave. The only food I could find was some green grass, which she devoured with much appreciate and a thankful grunt.

The picture I took of Jessie won a blue ribbon in my camera club's contest.



Email June at: junebassemir@aol.com

I raced to the door AND...

By Ross Carletta

I thought I was the last person on Earth, and then I heard a knock on the door.

The world as I knew it had ended months ago, but I'd missed the spectacle that became a disaster because I'd made it to my underground bunker when the sirens wailed.



I'd waited several days before venturing outside. Everything was gone. Everything was wasted. There was no one left. Just me, or so I thought.

Whatever it was that had destroyed everything also tore up the

earth so violently that my underground bunker was now on the surface, its door exposed to the gray sky and subdued sun.

I had food and I had water that would last for years, carefully stored over the decades for just an occasion. During the following months, I wandered my old neighborhood, never venturing more than a half day's march from my bunker. I didn't ever want to be caught out at night. Who knew what dangers were there?

As I wandered and searched, I found valuable goods — a battery-powered lantern, an axe, fuel for my Coleman lantern and stove, a rifle and ammunition — that I hauled back to my bunker. But I saw no life, not a dog, not a cat, not even a rat. And no humans or remains of humans.

Then came the knock.

I was sipping a hot cup of tea and eating a canned ham and cheese sandwich. The sound of knuckle on my metal bunker door startled me so severely that my knee involuntarily jerked upward, bouncing the old Army field desk I used for a dinner table, sending the cup of tea flying into the air. My entire body tensed.

I grabbed for my rifle, doused the Coleman lantern and waited.

Knock, knock, knock.

I stared at the bunker door through the pitch dark. That sound could only mean one thing. I wasn't alone. At least one other human had survived.

After more minutes of waiting, I carefully reached for my door, slowly released the lock and turned the latch. I inched open the door a crack. Light sliced through and pierced the darkness of my bunker.

I peeked out but saw nothing. Had my visitor given up and gone away? My fear and caution quickly turned to despair and want. Don't go away, I screamed inside my head.

I leaped from the bunker, hoping to catch whomever it was before it was out of sight. It was gone.

I ran in ever-wider circles, searching, calling out, "Are you there? Don't go away."

No one answered. Not a sound but the wind.

I made my way back to my bunker and sat in the dark. Had my fear deprived me of companionship? Was I wrong to be distrustful? Had my paranoia sealed my fate to a life of loneliness?

Then came the knock again.

Without hesitation, with a sense of renewed energy and hope, I raced to the door and threw it wide open.

Follow the script

by David Griffin

I thought I was the last person on Earth, and then I heard a knock on the door, a rather heavy knock.

I'm pretty sure it wasn't G. Friday. She's a person, but she's not due in this world till later. She's always interested in what I say and listens intently whenever I speak forth paragraphs of what most people would consider drivel. G. Friday happily writes down the words I dictate — for a nickel a line. She never worries over how weird my world gets but simply follows me into to it. She recently asked for a raise.

I know, I know. There was that knock on the door and I'll tell you about it. No, it wasn't G. Friday's tentative little tap. These were heavy bangs, a thudding that rattled the

door in its frame. The strikes came rather slowly all in a row, and I'm sure there were three. They were like: THUD! (Say something quick.) THUD! (Say it again quick.) THUD! (That was too quick!) At the sound of the first, my eyes swept to the door, and when the second and third arrived, I saw the knob wiggle and heard the lock chain jiggle. Could three mean something? One should be careful of interpretation.

Remember the movie “On The Beach?” Marooned in Australia after the nuclear armageddon, Gregory Peck takes a submarine with a full crew all the way to America to investigate an erratic Morse code radio signal. It might have come from West Coast survivors who didn't know the telegraph code but tapped the key incessantly for help. Turns out the wind was whipping a window shade and a Coke bottle down on the telegraph key of a deserted transmitting station, powered by a nuclear reactor that would run almost forever. What a great twist in the story.

Is three strikes on the door similar to three rifle shots



fired in the woods when you're lost? Or could they be meaningless, only coincidence? Maybe three turkey buzzards happened to fly into my door with perfect but unintentional timing. Stranger things have happened. Everyone disappeared 15 minutes ago.

Of course I went to the door to open it to see if Gregory Peck waited outside. He's dead, but great actors never truly die. This is my movie, and I should certainly be able to choose the actors, no matter their breathing status or even their contractual obligations.

Before I could put my hand on the knob, the door swung outward, revealing a heavy old man. He looked just like me and told me he was the last person on Earth. He wanted to know why I banged thrice on his door? Behind him stood little G. Friday, pen in hand, writing furiously as she tried to keep up with our conversation.

My hand hurts awful and my knuckles are skinned. I may give up writing film scripts. They get inside my head too easily. Besides, three strikes and

Email Dave at: dave@windsweptpress.com

In the year 1749

By James “Jim” Lamanna Jr.

I thought I was the last man on Earth. It was July in the year 1749 when I heard the knock on my door, an occurrence that had not happened since the world outside disintegrated countless years ago as a result of drastic climate changes.

Another knock. I hesitated, terrified at not knowing what to expect. It had been so long since there had been any normalcy in my lonely life that I could not bring myself to open the door. This, despite my desire to experience the companionship of another human being.

It was much the same as the time I was marooned on a remote island off the shores of South America, alone and lonely until my rescue and return to England many years ago.

My life in an England, largely destroyed and desolate, became bizarre and difficult, but I managed to stay alive and to nurture my hope that one day the Earth would miraculously return to what it had been. Should I jeopardize what little I had by opening the door?

Again, another knock on the door, and I knew I must open it. And yet, some reluctance remained. My life wasn't much, but it was life and I wanted to cling to it.

Despite my misgivings, I responded to another knock with "Who is it?" An answer, "Please. Let me in." A man's voice, pleading. He sounded normal. I opened the door slowly, peering out at a white-haired and white-bearded man whose wizened face look strangely familiar.

"Who are you? Please, come in." The visitor stepped over the threshold, staring at my aged face, and I sensed he, too, noted a familiarity.

I led him into my kitchen, motioned for him to



sit at a crude table and asked, “What’s your name?” He replied, “Marcus Friday. I’m glad I finally found another human being.”

I studied my guest, jubilant at his arrival, and then it struck me. “Friday. Did you say Friday? My God, this is unbelievable!”

Recognition shone in Mr. Friday’s eyes. He stood. We hugged, continued to study each other through tear-filled eyes.

Mr. Friday said, “I have been wandering so long. I only survived because you taught me how when we were on the island. After we lost each other, I was rescued by a passing ship.”

There followed a long narrative from Mr. Friday, who outlined how he had made his way to what was the England I had described to him during our long nights on the island. In Britain, he befriended a kindly old woman who taught him all he now knew. He had been wandering since.

I said with grave sincerity, “I’m so pleased that we have found each other. We are probably the last humans on earth, or my name isn’t Robinson Crusoe.”

Email Jim at: jameslamanna@yahoo.com

Unsettled

By Sheryl L. Nelms

I thought
I was

the last person
on earth

then
I heard

a knock
at the door

staring out
of the peephole

I see
ten million

purple
eyes

focused
on

me



Email Sheryl at: slnelms@aol.com

Annabelle Lee



By Dean Rea

I thought I was the last person on Earth, and then I heard a knock on the door.

“Dang,” I said aloud. “Who could that be?”

Who expects an intrusion when you’re all alone in the world and when you’re thinking about Annabelle Lee? As I’ve told you repeatedly, I met Annabelle Lee quite by chance while I was in the sixth grade, and we have been friends forever.

At least that’s the way I remember it.

I also recall that Annabelle Lee taught me how to kiss.

Not the peck-on-the-cheek or slightly-on-the-lips way. I'll leave the details to your imagination, but we kissed a lot.

Annabelle Lee also taught me how to dance. Not the hippy-hop stuff. Not the tango. Not the hold-you-lightly-in-my-arms stuff. But the up-close-and-tight kind. You know what I mean. In any event we got well acquainted dancing, talking strolls in the moonlight.

She also taught me a lot of other stuff, especially about women. I was an only child whose only



friends had been boys my age. Annabelle Lee was my age but with her help I discovered that's where the similarities between girls and boys ended.

We liked to take hikes, to ride bikes and to sit and talk about our futures. She wanted to be a nurse. I wasn't sure what I wanted to be, but I said I wanted to be the president of something to impress her.

Eventually we fell in love. It wasn't that hold-hands stuff

or sit-snugly together stuff. Well, I can't explain without blushing.

We had a family and we moved a lot. First to Jefferson City, then to Kansas City and then to...

And we had a lot of fun playing cards like hearts, pinochle and the game where you use two decks. It's called...

Well, I thought I was the last person on Earth, but the knock on the door must be Annabelle Lee coming to surprise me.

"Come in," I called. The door opened and a woman dressed in white entered.

"You're not Annabelle Lee," I said disappointingly.

"No," she said. "I'm your nurse, and it's time to take your pills."

Email Dean at: deanrea@comcast.net