

The Society of Southwestern Authors



Story Snacks

Volume 6

Note to the Authors and Readers of Story Snacks:

I want to apologize for being so late getting this volume #6 out to you. I've had some physical handicaps that have delayed my work and I'm sorry.

I will endeavor to get these publications out in a more timely manner.

Mary Ann Carman

“No Skeleton in my Closet...Just One at my Book Reading”

by Sharon Kennedy

It isn't every day that authors have unusual guests attend their book reading. But Mr. Bones was my guest at a book reading at the Tara Woods Senior Community Clubhouse in North Fort Myers, Florida on Sunday, January 16, 2022.

Mr. Bones is a full-sized skeleton who wears a red brimmed hat and sunglasses and belongs to residents Frankie and David Lindon. He usually sits in a chair by a table in front of their home if he's not otherwise busy.

Mr. Bones is quite a character, like his owner David. He takes on different personas throughout the year, accompanied by corresponding signs. He is an active resident of the community, dressing for Halloween and other holidays and riding in golf carts during the parades. But his activities do not end there. Sometimes, he is just plain silly. Once, Bones set up a kissing booth with a sign saying \$1.00 for a kiss. Apparently, some of the residents are just as silly as his owner walked out of the house one morning to see \$3.00 left on the table of the kissing booth. No one fessed up to leaving the money.

Mr. Bones has also tried his luck at water skiing—in three scenes. The first week showed him at the beginning of the ski ramp and the third week showed him slumped over the front of the golf cart. Even though his attempt didn't go well, at least he didn't have any soft tissue injuries. Last week he dressed in a white lab coat to administer booster Covid vaccines, using a meat injector needle. But, by far the most popular scene has been him peeking over a fence saying “Howdy-Ho Neighbor” reminiscent of Wilson on Tool Time.

Residents of this senior community love Bones, as he injects humor into an otherwise ordinary day. I had been seeing glimpses of Mr. Bones on a friend's FB page and found his many activities amusing. So, when I travelled to Florida for a recent book event, I told Mr. Bones' owner that I would like to have a photo taken with this special resident. Mr. Bones came to the clubhouse and sat in a chair next to me. He seemed to enjoy the experience.

I am now smitten with Bones. As I was leaving the Clubhouse after my event, the song “Me and Mrs. Jones” popped into my head. It was released in the 1970s and sung by Billie Paul. It's about a man having an affair with a married woman. The first words of the song are *we have*

a thing going on. Fifty years later, it's me and Mr. Bones that have a thing going on. Lucky, I don't have to worry about a Mrs. Bones.

The Morning Of

by Solomon Cantanio

I sipped coffee, and munched on cooling bacon, eggs, and toast as I got ready for work. I watched the local traffic and weather--my weekday morning routine. The weather man described clear skies, with hot, dry conditions. In the middle of the five-day forecast, the station's broadcast went dark. A cyber attack? Moments later a message in all caps was superimposed over a video loop. On the right side of the screen, one after another, missiles launched from subterranean silos with ETA shown at the bottom. On the left, unnamed but recognizable city skylines of each corresponding target with the word "LIVE" at the top left. The white lettering read in English, "YOU COULD NOT WIN. WE ARE YOUR BETTERS. YOU WERE FOOLISH TO OPPOSE US. NOW YOUR REIGN OF TERROR IS AT ITS END. YOU ARE OUR EXAMPLE TO OTHERS. NOW BATHE IN FIRE AND DIE FOREVER!"

I grabbed my keys and phone as I crashed through my front door into the yard. My wife, Gina had already gone to the hospital for work. Four, then five loud pale streaks ripped across the sky. In a few moments the last one would reach its target. Across the street a couple people emerged from their homes to silently gaze skyward. I searched their panic-marred faces. It would be quick... for anyone at ground zero. We were down wind and in the heaviest of fallout zones.

The shape of the houses looked familiar; unimportant. The people appeared small. Most of the doors on my street stayed shut. Fear or ignorance I suspect. Anyone who could face down a nuke with apathy--no, there are no such people... not at this level of society, not that I'll ever meet. It was too late to flee. For some, a slow death seemed too big a risk. The roaring of the rockets subsided slightly to permit a single gunshot to resonate. It came from three houses to the right on my side of the street.

Two more white streaks screamed back in the other direction. Those were "ours" but knowing families "over there" will soon be similarly afflicted, or worse remain unaware, sickened me. I stared up at the sky waiting to be changed into vapor—at best. I raised my phone to dial my wife but there was no signal. Across the street, Manuel had a rolled up newspaper in hand. We made eye contact and nodded as we always do. In two years we never shared a real conversation, who can blame folk nowadays? I looked left then crossed the street towards him

when the treetop behind him caught fire. The flash came from the right. The heat... I could see my bones, and his. We both hit the ground as the tall, bright bulb arose in the distance. "Bathe in fire," it read. I felt nothing. I thought of my wife and momentary death, "God, is it too late for us? Please have mercy and sort this out!"

Human Trafficking – Miracle

by Therese Griffin

The world of addictions is like a sleeping snake that opens one eye to say, "One more hit of heroin, cocaine, or alcohol won't hurt you. I'm your friend. I will help you cope." A young woman in high school started drinking heavily. Many will say, "What's the big deal? It's not drugs." It doesn't matter if you roll it, shoot it, pop it, or pour it; they are all kissing cousins. When you're on the inner circle of addictions, progression can take you places you don't want to go.

One morning Sandy [not her real name] needed a hit. She had already been to three treatment centers in Arizona, Colorado, and California. The sleeping snake became alive when she realized she needed fast and easy money. She was offered \$2,000 to drive across the Arizona border to Mexico to transport human trafficking victims back to the USA. On her drive toward the border, our loving God intervened in the form of a police officer who pulled her over because of a driving irregularity. The officer proceeded to take her to the local jail, booking her on the charge of drug procession and motorist violations.

Sandy called family members begging to get her out because of the possibility of going to prison. It was difficult for her mother to say, "No," Sandy cried, screamed, and cursed, "How can you not help your only daughter? I knew you never cared!" She was being pushed back into a corner with no way to get out. At that time, she couldn't see that the family was supportive of her earlier treatment opportunities. Doing time in the prison system finally became the impetus for her to change her playmates and playgrounds. During her drug journey, she was hanging with big guns and could have died or had a life as a victim in the world of human trafficking.

Since the age of 23, she has lived a clean and sober life with a beautiful daughter, 4-years-old, and in a loving relationship. Now, Sandy is age 31 and a consultant of healthy and nutritional eating. Relationships with family and friends are healthy. She realized that Mom's "tough love" helped break the chain of self-destruction. She has moved from the dark side to the light, being the beloved daughter of God. Sandy embraces the fact that she is a miracle through

the Grace of God and is grateful that the police officers stopped her before crossing the border to take others through the gates of hell in the human trafficking and drug world. Sandy could be any one of us or a family member. The power of addictions is deadly.

Please, when you are out, if you see any suspicious behavior, please contact:

National Human Trafficking Hotline

1 (888) 373-7888

Fawn's Foreleg

by Stuart Watkins

Taking my dogs for a walk in the desert, as I often do, this walk turned out to be more of an adventure than I expected. The desert landscape behind my home is being surveyed for a new housing development. Cats are digging new trails, leveling land, and scraping the outlines of new roads. Back hoes are digging up cacti to be used in future landscaping where needed.

Buzzards circle overhead seeking the kills from the heavy equipment as they run over rabbit holes, ground squirrel holes, snake holes, lizard holes, and everything that might be in their surveyed path.

We just walked along and I let my dogs off their leashes.

Strider, the Black Lab, would run ahead, then retrace his steps to see if I was still following, then he would bound ahead. Ruby, the Golden Retriever, would just wander and circle. She would often look to see if I was still in the general vicinity.

When I directed them with my arm if I decided to walk up a ravine, follow this path or that, they both would head in the direct I signaled. We were a team. When I called their names, they would come bounding. This was usually water time, treat time, or both. Then I would put their leashes back on and we would walk together for a spell.

Ruby spotted the foreleg first. A fawn's front left foreleg was curled up as it awaited the coyotes to attack. That was all that was left; no spine, ribs, head, or vertebra. Some small bones were scattered around along with hide scraps, but there it lay; the foreleg.

Pulling out a plastic bag I retrieved the foreleg, feeling that it shouldn't be left out in the desert. It died such a fearsome death. It had been circled, snipped at with snarling teeth, and became so exhausted and tired it just lay down and waited.

We heard the thunder before seeing the lightning. Rain started lightly and then started a real downpour. Both dogs were glad when they heard me say, "Home, we are going home." They turned and pulled on their leashes.

Lightning streaked all around. Thunder boomed directly overhead. Rain slashed down, driven by gusty winds. Strider pulled ahead on his leash. He knew where he was headed. Ruby kept cringing with each loud burst of thunder. She would look at me with pleading eyes as though asking me to get her home as quickly as possible. We were drenched.

All of a sudden, I decided to stop and take the fawn's foreleg out of the plastic bag and sat it down under a mesquite tree. It belonged here in the desert, not on a shelf in my office. Looking at the dark sky, rain washed out the tears streaming down my face.

Thunder and lightning rolled across the desert as we made our way home.