

CULTISTORM

Sample flash fiction stories from the Narrative Script Book



We face each other, like gentlemen with pistols at dawn, excluded from the coming and goings of the world. People pass us by in ignorance and the noise of the working day grow silent around us. It's only the two of us standing here, outside of space and time to fight for something, the real horror of which perhaps neither of us truly understand.

He is a man in his fifties, the cut of his suit suggest wealth and a good social status. His face seems to be carved in stone. It doesn't show even a trace of emotion. He reaches towards his glasses slowly, maybe to signal to me that this is not yet a part of our fight and he takes off the seemingly modern, light-blocking lenses which were hiding his eyes.

A strangled cry breaks out of my throat: there are no eyes behind the lenses, just two deep black hollows that radiate timeless, ancient and cunning intelligence. In the corner of my eyes I see that the people around us don't react, nobody stops in shock, there are no terrified cries or screams. I realise that we seem to be in another place, another dimension. I can't look away from the cultist's nonexistent eyes, I am fixed in the horror of it. The two dark eye sockets grow wider, I see a cavalcade of swirling stars, unfamiliar solar systems orbiting around gigantic light spheres, all disappear into endless darkness. I finally understand that what is happening to me and what collapsed on our world in Mr. Kleiman's tiny, Arkham room, is ancient and inhuman. Our small intelligence and short life is pathetically insufficient to comprehend it all.

The bell of a fire engine dashing down the street pulls me out of the vision. My legs tremble beneath me. I am standing in the middle of the bustling street, still facing the elegant man with dark glasses.



The cultist walks with increasing speed, as if he knows that I'm following him. I also hasten my steps. A black cat jumps out from under a gate. It looks up at me, shakes itself and leaps away lithely before I reach it. The view of the city enveloped in the descending twilight is so ordinary that I don't even notice it. My quarry suddenly crosses the street and turns a corner, but he can't lose me.

As I rush past ancient gates, another cat jumps in front of me. I wonder if it was the same one I've met earlier, it is disturbingly similar, I pause for a moment. It looks up at me, shakes itself and hurries away. I move on quickly, down two more streets and determined not to lose him. Suddenly, a cat jumps in front of me... again? I'm more sure that it's the same cat... It stops, looks at me, shakes itself and moves on. But somehow I feel its eyes on me. I run on, lost in thought, past streets and corners.

It comes again... yes, it must be the same cat, even the movement is the same. It looks at me, shakes itself, then leaps on. It's *Déjà vu*, finding me again and again. I'm clutching at the medallions in my pocket, I know that I need to use them soon. The man in front of me changes direction again.

The cat jumps out the gate of the next house. I look into its eyes deeply, only for a moment, and I notice something I haven't seen before. Maybe I just didn't want to see it. In its menacing, yellow eyes I discover not one, but two pupils. It feels as though the animal was trying to see behind my eyes, trying to know my thoughts and consume my soul. It shook itself as per usual and leapt on.

The light is getting dull, evening is slowly creeping in. Streets and windows seem to rush past me.

I can already see it, I'm waiting for it. It jumps out the gate, it stops, it looks at me... my head starts to turn... I'm not continuing my chase, I just stand there without words or feelings, frozen in front of the gate. I can't deny it anymore, I don't believe it could be a coincidence, and it wasn't a mere *déjà vu*: a tiny part of our world has been ripped out of the fabric of reality, repeating itself without end, slowly grinding my sanity down.



I've caught him, I've cornered him at last, he has nowhere to go. The yard where he escaped to has no other exit, apparently he doesn't know the city as well as I do. He seems to contemplate his next move, if there was any way to save himself, but in the end he decides not to continue his flight. He turns around slowly, deliberately and steps in front of me.

A hood hides his entire face, I presume he is a man because of his clothes, but I don't really know. He reaches his arm towards me with an almost aristocratic gesture and this is when I see the strange medallion in his hand. It's completely different from the one I have. As he stretches it towards me, a dark mist seems to rise from the medallion and tendrils of smoke reach for me. The cultist lets out an inhuman scream, a high-pitched, continuous noise that a human throat would simply be unable to produce. I grab my medallion, pull it out of my pocket and hold this unholy amulet towards the cultist.

In that very moment the same horrible scream breaks out from my throat. Something takes over my body, I feel powerless and the blood freezes in my veins, but I can't do anything against it, I'm not the master of my body, throat or vocal cords anymore.

I scream just like him, for long period, without breathing, as if both of us had an endless stream engine instead of our lungs to power this cacophony without the tiniest break.

It ends, as suddenly as it began. We both stop screaming at the same moment, then the man in front of me collapses as though he was merely a rag doll wearing a man's clothes.

I return my medallion to my pocket, then crouch next to the man. I peel back his hood, to stare at the lifeless face among the rags. I am looking at myself.

I come around two days later in a room of the hospital in town. My hands are handcuffed to the bed.



I'm sitting in the café, I have been here for hours, I sip my sixth cup of coffee, my eyes glued to the building on the other side of the street. I got a tip at the police station that this is where those strange men and women, who hide under dark umbrellas even on bright days and who have appeared in our city in the past months, are going to meet tonight. They must be the ones the agency wants me to find and I really hope that tonight I will get some results.

It's been quiet since I arrived, nobody has entered or left the building. It was once so luxurious and imposing, but lost its splendor over the years. Another hour has gone by and my coffee cup is empty again. The nausea from too much coffee washes over me and my temples throb with a dull ache. Darkness has fallen outside. I glance at my watch and I realize that the café is going to close soon. My informant must have made a mistake.

Just when I step out of the door, an elegant Cord L29 stops in front of the building. A man and a woman get out. The weak light of street lamps makes it hard to see, but I think they're middle aged. Their clothes are elegant and tasteful and judging from their posture and gestures, and their car, they belong to the upper classes. They enter the sizable door of the two-floor building silently, taking their time.

I hesitate for a moment: should I wait or should I follow them... I take an uncertain step from the sidewalk when the headlights of the parked car light up. I recoil, because I hadn't realized that they had a chauffeur - the man got out of the driver's seat. The Otto engine rumbles and the car turns slowly on the abandoned street. As it pulls up in front of me I let out a loud cry of surprise; there is nobody at the steering wheel.

I run away from the car without even looking back. I crouch behind the house on the corner, leaning against the wall, trying to catch my breath and gather my strength in case I need to continue my flight from this horrifying apparition, but I can hear nothing.

I look around the corner carefully, but the street is empty.

Did it really happen or was it just the caffeine in my blood playing a demonic trick on me? I keep panting for breath when I feel a gently touch on my shoulder.



The medallions in my hand paralyse the man for a moment, he turns around as if he was dizzy. He is muttering confused words. I shoot him twice. He collapses before me without a sound.

I crouch beside the dead cultist and search his pockets methodically. After some fumbling, I find a yellowed envelope with a bunch of photographs in it. I thumb through them, and find they all showed groups of four-six men and women, standing around various things that look like horrible altars, perhaps performing some ritual, they looked as if they were in a trance.

I don't recognise anyone in the pictures until I get to the last one. I don't want to believe my eyes. Five men, all of them wearing trench coats, stood in a circle, in the same dazed and trancelike posture like those in the other pictures, around an indescribably altar with the mutilated carcass of some kind of animal. I had never seen a creature of such deformity, but this wasn't the most blood curdling feature of the photograph. The five men performing the ritual, the five men whose faces radiated morbid satisfaction and joy... were us! I saw myself in the middle of the picture, and around me my colleagues with whom we waged our desperate war against the hauntingly real visions of madness.



It's getting dark... I'm following the men in long coats, who are marching through the city's narrow alleys chanting monotonously. I don't want to get too close to them because I hope that they will lead me to the place of their rituals. The shadows on the wall cast by the gas lamps along the street are becoming taller. I turn around the next corner, but I stop suddenly, it's a dead-end, there is nowhere to go. The street ends with a red wall, but so irrationally as if the wall had just descended between the houses. It seems so out of place, an ancient theatre curtain made of bricks.

Just for a second, my heart stops; the men I've been following have disappeared, as though the bricks were to prevent me from following them. A cold fear washes over me: the shadows of the men appear on the red wall towering before me, as though it was just a canvas revealing the silhouette of the people standing behind it. The chanting has started again, oozing from between the bricks, the noise grows louder and more furious, as more shadows join the choir projected on the wall.

The sound of a kicked pebble behind me, brings me back to myself. but too late, I feel the blow on my head, then everything goes dark...



I manage to break the boarded door with one kick and I leap into the musty basement holding my loaded gun in one hand and my medallion in the other. The room is much bigger than I expect. A makeshift altar made of bones stands in the middle of the abandoned hall and I spot the cultist I'd been following for days behind it.

He holds an ancient tome in his hand and, God is my witness, the cover of the book seems to be made of human skin. He doesn't notice my arrival. He continues his sickening chant with eyes closed. He is clearly oblivious to the world around him.

I lower my weapon because I not sure what to do: I can't start shooting at a fellow human being who is visibly incapacitated and out of his mind; every cell in my body revolts against such a fundamentally immoral thought. That's when I hear a quiet noise, steadily getting louder, a sound that speaks to me from the middle of the altar: it whisperes at first, then starts speaking rapidly and in the end it shouts with an unbearable force. The cultist doesn't stop chanting. The cacophony is horrible and paralyzing; I didn't understand the words and sentences, but they crept under my skin, behind my eyes, into my head and painfully sharp pictures started to flash in front of my eyes.

I can see my father, the house where I was born, the carpenter living next door, my first love, my colleagues from my previous job. Their faces are twisted and all of them shouting the same horrendous words the cultist and the altar were howling! I can't bear it anymore, I shoot blindly and mindlessly until I fired all the bullets from my gun.



The cultist in front of me is almost running, the long cloak covering his body fluttering around him. He doesn't look back, but I know he's noticed me and he is running from me. I try to keep pace with him, but after countless winding alleys I am breathing heavily.

I turn the corner and find myself in a large square with an old church in the center. I saw the cultist's cloak disappear behind the ancient church door. I follow him in, but I find the nave of the church completely empty. To the right I notice stairs leading up to the bell tower and I hear the fading sound of footsteps. I run up the narrow steps and I pushed into the belfry with my colt in my hand. This room is also empty, I can only see the large tall bell standing alone in the middle. I walk around it, but I can't see any footsteps on the dusty floor. I look down out the window, trying to see if the cultist has managed to jump out, but the cloaked figure is nowhere to be seen.

The bell starts ringing behind me, so unexpectedly and so loudly that I fall on my knees in fear. I press my hands on my ears, but the incredible sound of the bell is already ringing in my chest. I turn around with the intention of crawling towards the staircase at the other side of the room, trying to get away from the unbearable noise as quickly as possible. I lay on my stomach in the dust of the church, I keep staring at the rumbling bell.

The gigantic metal bell in the middle of the room, which stood completely still.

The painful ringing that threatened to tear my eardrums apart was coming undoubtedly from the motionless bell, growing stronger and more menacing with every second...

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