



Animal Hospital of Cornelius

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Halloween Night Stalker

I have always known that Allister was a bit....well, special. Ever since he was a baby, he has had an eye condition that made him look like he was constantly scowling. He wasn't born like that though, something happened when he was very young. He was taken to the Animal Hospital of Cornelius, where doctors determined that the condition was caused by a reaction to a rare spider's toxic bite.



There is no diagnostic test that would have caught the rare toxin, but rather the doctors combined experience and clinical acumen directed them to the specific cause. Allister didn't seem to be

impaired by the condition, he was a fast runner and good climber. But in other ways, especially to others, he seemed strange. He didn't have many friends, and teachers would comment on how unsociable he was in school, but his mother's response was always "They just really didn't know him." or "He's just going through a shy phase."

Allister was a good student, with his best subject being science. His art work coming home however, was always a bit dark, but the teacher never expressed any concern other than that it was unusual for a student to make a Halloween picture around Christmas-time. Allister loved Halloween, the trick-or-treating, pranking the neighbors and acting all hair-raisingly fierce and frightening. He like to put on his hockey goalie mask and pretend he was Jason

from the Friday the 13th movies. It is natural for a cat to be curious about death, the afterlife and other such things.

But the rumors surrounding mysterious deaths in the neighborhood, could they really be true? I had been the Scaggs' baby-sitter for several years for Alex, Chloe and Emma Jane, and now for their younger children Allister, Amelia, Isabella and Isis. I would never have believed that Allister could somehow be responsible for these deaths, but the circumstantial evidence was difficult to ignore, and *he did* appear at the scene of most of these events. He also would joke most inappropriately about the victims somehow deserving their untimely demises.

The deaths were sporadic at first, the dead body of a bird turning up on the back porch of the next door neighbor, then three weeks later a second slashed up victim was discovered in exactly the

same location. This led authorities to suspect someone with a local connection, and as there were no witnesses that were coming forward, it was likely someone who would not seem out of place being in the area. And given Allister's penchant for the macabre, wearing the Jason mask and such, he was questioned. He did not have an alibi that could be confirmed by anyone either, heightening suspicions of his involvement. But no physical evidence linked him to anything, so police were simply



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THE RAVEN— by Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary, Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore, While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping, As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door. "'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door - Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December, And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor. Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore - Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before; So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating, "'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door; - This it is, and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer, "Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore; But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping, And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door, That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;— Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing, Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before; But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token, And the only

word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore!" This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"— Merely this, and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning, Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before. "Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice: Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;— 'Tis the wind and nothing more."

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter, In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore; Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he; But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling, By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore. "Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven, Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly shore Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!" Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly, Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore; For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being Ever yet was blest with seeing bird above his chamber door Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door, With such name as "Nevermore."

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did out-pour. Nothing further then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered Till I scarcely more than muttered, "other friends have flown before On the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before." Then the bird said, "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken, "Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store, Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore Of 'Never—nevermore'."

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling, Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door; Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core; This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o'er, But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o'er, She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor. "Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee Respite—respite and nepenthe,

from thy memories of Lenore! Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!" Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!— Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore, Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted On this home by horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!" Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil—prophet still, if bird or devil! By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn, It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore." Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Be that word our sign in parting, bird or fiend," I shrieked, upstarting— "Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore! Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken! Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door! Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!" Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door; And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming, And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor; And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor Shall be lifted—nevermore!

M is for MURDER

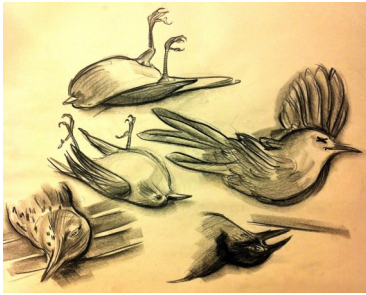
left to cold investigations. The slayings stopped for a couple of months, then as summer came to a close, a horribly mutilated squirrel was found! An obvious homicide and yet still no evidence of the killer! The intensity seemed much more violent than the birds before. The authorities' investigative profiler advised that the killer likely had pent up aggression from an insatiable desire for blood.

The discovery of the squirrel in the school yard led to yet more bodies being turned up as the crime scene investigation team widened the



search of the grounds for more evidence. A mass grave of recently slain victims was found. The body count of 42 included birds of many different species, mice, moles, a couple more squirrels, a few opossum and one rabbit. All were murdered with a similar style weapon, though due to the varying degrees of morbidity, it would be difficult to determine an exact match. One thing was clear though, the killer was merciless, and there was evidence that the murderer seemed to toy with the victims prior to their deaths. Due to the graphic

nature of the deaths, an artists rendering has been substituted here for the crime scene photo.



But Allister couldn't be responsible for all that, I mean I'd watched him loads of times. I received a call from the Scaggs, asking if I could watch him and his sisters on Halloween night. I was not busy, so I agreed.

At 9:00 o'clock we shut off the outside lights and called it an evening for giving out candy. Then Allister and I had the best evening. We crashed with left-over junk food, beat the new level of his video game, prank called several kids from his school, chugged on soda.

All was merry until the numbers on the clock flashed to midnight. "Sleep," he murmured out of the blue. "Sleep." Taking this as a hint that it was time to hit the hay, I dragged my sleeping bag to the couch, waiting for Allister to follow me. Instead, he kept mumbling out random phrases.

I closed my eyes, reassuring myself that he was just overwhelmed from the night's excitement. He was *not* mental. He had *not* gone

off his rocker.

Just as my train of thoughts began to fade into slumber, a shrill laughter rang out into the night. I bolted awake, sweat itching at my forehead. I pondered if I had dreamed the sound for only a moment before arising to look for Allister.

He was standing over his sleeping sisters, his shrill voice echoing in the silence of the house.

"Ring around the rosie, this evil thing it knows me," he chanted, "Lost ghosts surround me, I can't...fall...down." Hairs prickle on the back of my neck as I watch him. I shoo him out of the room and return to my restless sleep. After my eyes are shut for maybe only an hour, a blood curdling scream pounds its way into my ears. I rise, realizing this is reality. "Allister?" My voice trembles.

Laughter comes from the girls room. Gulping, I make my way into the hallway. "AMELIA? ISABELLA? ISIS?" I call for his sisters out of desperation, thinking the worst. The laughs are drowned out by a strange moan. The singing returns, soon paired with shrieks.

"Ring around the rosie, ashes, ashes, we all fall down..." A trail of red stains the carpet of the hallway. It streams to the girls' room, where the door is busted open. I scan the other rooms quickly for Allister, but they are empty. There's only one other place where he can be. A sudden

bloom of cool air blankets me as I enter the room.

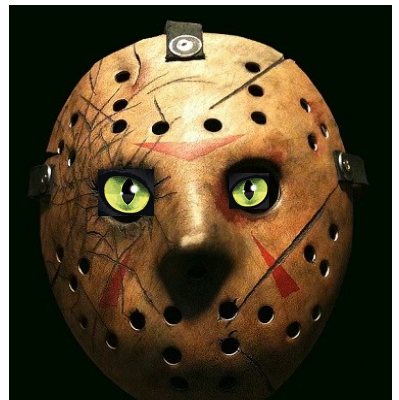
"Allister, are you in here?" I call out into the darkness. Silence.

Thrumming wings of a caged bird swing in my heart, over and over. The door creaks open.

There he stands, his figure outlined in the moonlight. He is wearing that hockey mask and is looming over his sisters! I look down to see that the three are toying with what appears to be a rabbit's body, their claws poised. The cry of pain's source now clear to me.

I scream, drawing Allister's attention. He looks up, his wild eyes churning with fire. He moves quickly cutting off my retreat back into the hallway.

"Now you know our family secret, but don't worry, the blood stains will fade before you are found." Allister smiles. The silver moonlight glistens through the window on his razor claws as he leaps to attack showing me a final look at that horrible mask and those demonic eyes!



A special thanks to the Scaggs family for allowing the use of their pets' names and likenesses to be used in this story. It is important to note that no birds, mice, moles, opossums, or rabbits were harmed or injured in the making of this completely fictitious story. Any likeness to real persons, places and/or events are unintended and completely coincidental.

ALASKA: *The Last Frontier*

Some of you may have noticed a certain doctor was not here at the beginning of this month, but if you didn't, to that he would probably say "No Worries." I don't know if he came up with that himself or if it rubbed off on him from "Crocodile Dundee" but Dr. Kevin, as we call him around here, has always had an adventurous spirit. He makes the Animal Hospital of

Cornelius a great place to work and a great place to bring your pets to too.

If he could, he would probably like to mine for gold in Alaska on Gold Rush, or be a crab boat Captain on Deadliest Catch and then market his treasures on Pawn Stars. Dr. Kevin would be great at any of those, but we are glad that he chooses to call North Carolina his home.

Getting back to his latest adventure vacation though, he travelled once again

to the pristine primitive wilderness of Kodiak, Alaska for some incredible fishing and solitude in one of the most remote spots in all of the United States. Dr. Kevin and his father have done this trip together before as many of you may already know.

This time, Dr. Kevin ventured out with a close family friend for 10 days and nights of tent camping and fishing. Dr. Kevin used a host of homemade lures that he spends hours meticulously tying during his spare time. Given his success, his own personal brand of fly fishing lures can not be far off. His catches certainly drew the attention of other local "fisherman", though Dr. Kevin advised that the best

bear repellent of the trip was his camera. He need only attempt to take a picture and the bears would disappear into the wilds of Alaska.

We are glad to have Dr. Kevin back safe and sound and are enjoying his videos found on his You Tube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq-h08V6Kh8FPMsUuMbLy2Q>



Employees of the Month

Congratulations go this month to two employees, Heather Kegley as she is recognized as our September Employee of the Month, and Betty Martin as our October Employee of the Month!

Heather has been a technician for the Animal Hospital of Cornelius since 1999! Yes before the millennium, Y2K was just an acronym for You too Kegley? But we digress, Heather has been scaring patients here for quite a while, we mean *caring* for patients here for a long time. She is an exemplary employee who always per-

forms her duties at a high level of professionalism. We appreciate her great support!

Betty Martin has been with the practice since May of 2013 and is a valuable member of our team. She has been taking care of 3 more orphaned kittens for almost three weeks now and they have her moving like the *Walking Dead*. Seriously though—she has done a fantastic job nursing these three poor little ones so that they will have a chance for a family. *Spook-tacular* work both Heather and Betty! We appreciate it very much!

