



# BROKEN

A FLASH FICTION  
COLLECTION

FROM THE TWISTED MIND OF  
KENNETH JAMES ALLEN

# Broken

**Collections, Volume 1**

Kenneth James Allen

Published by Kenneth James Allen, 2020.

This is a work of fiction. Similarities to real people, places, or events are entirely coincidental.

BROKEN

**First edition. February 2, 2020.**

Copyright © 2020 Kenneth James Allen.

Written by Kenneth James Allen.

# **CONTENTS**

**AWOKEN**

1

**LEAGUE**

5

**WET WORKS**

10

**DAWN**

13

**FORGOTTEN**

18

**STYX**

22

**INSIDER**

26

**GAVEL**

30

**LURE**

33

**MOMENTS**

39



# Awoken



THE MAN'S EYES SNAPPED open, his pupils adjusting to the dull yellow glow with ease. He was lying on the floor, which was somewhere between carpet and concrete and he couldn't quite put his finger on what it reminded him of. He pushed himself off the hard surface and stood with bare feet. He viewed his surroundings, spinning on the spot with as much decorum as a defensive tackle attempting a pirouette. A frosted glass wall encircled him.

"Hello?" His voice echoed around the vacuum. He looked up to see where the wall curved in to meet a charred disc, a plume of black in its centre. The confined space made him claw at his throat, as if oxygen was a scarce commodity.

"Hello?" he repeated. "What am I doing here?"

Muffled sounds floated around him, too disjointed to form into any words, too incoherent to make any sense.

The cold hit him and he could feel an emptiness grow inside his stomach. An itch ran the length of his left arm and he scratched at it until it was raw. That's when he noticed the tattoo, an intricate tribal artwork that wrapped around his wrist and ventured up his arm, disappearing into the sleeve of his orange jumpsuit. He traced the black ink with his finger, hoping for the memories to stir, however, his mind was as empty as his stomach. He traced up to a tag on his left breast, five numbers embossed on his outfit.

"What the hell is this?" he muttered to himself.

A muffled voice wafted over him. It was soft, like it floated on a pocket of air before coming to rest, encasing him. "What's your name?"

He shot a glance towards the ceiling, the source of the voice. He looked down at his feet, hoping a name would come. “Ch ...Christian,” he called out. “Christian Clay.” His name came easier to him than he thought it would yet did not give him any solace. Panic gripped his voice as the cold grasped at his throat. “I don’t know where I –”

A voice cut him off. “Where are you from?”

“I ... I don’t know. What is this place? Who are you?”

More muffled voices. Coldness. Emptiness.

“I don’t feel well,” he said. “Can you help me?”

Nothing. He grabbed at his stomach. It felt like his insides were melting, the great machine grinding to a halt. He ran a hand over his shaved head, the cold, smooth surface akin to rubbing a polished stone. He padded over to the wall.

“Hey,” he shrieked. “Can you hear me?”

No reply.

He placed a hand on the warm glass and he let the energy enter him, a soothing spark running up his spine. He cupped his hands to the wall and tried to peer through the foggy surface. Vague outlines and clouded movements filled his vision, neither of which gave him any answers.

“Hey!” he yelled. “Can you hear me?”

He thumped on the barricade and it shifted forwards. He stepped back and regarded his enclosure, once more spinning on the spot. As he did so, he realised the hunger was shrinking, replaced with a heat in the pit of his stomach.

Another voice invaded his senses, bringing with it the return of ailments, and he clutched at his stomach with cold hands.

“What’s your name?” the voice said.

He threw his head back. “Christian!” he roared with his last remnants of energy. “Let me out!”

His body transformed again, warmth growing inside him. Every shouted word seemed to fortify his being. A flood of questions fell upon him, all stunted and overlapped.

“Where are ...”, “When were ...”, “Why did ...”

The words berated him, pushed him down, seemed to douse his internal flames. He felt like he was drowning in a verbal storm, each sound splashing on his face, causing him to choke. He threw his hands to his ears, attempting to block out the noise, but the voices cut through him like daggers, infecting his senses and piercing his soul.

“Stop it,” he screamed. “Just stop it!”

The voices continued and his body shifted from a cold nothingness to a ball of intensified rage. He slammed a fist against the wall. Once again, his enclosure shifted and the voices dissipated. Energy coursed through his veins and his heart pumped out of control. He pushed again and another surge tore through him. Again and again, he pushed, punched and kicked the wall, and with every movement, he could feel himself getting stronger, the voices distant. He was almost immune to them. He could feel the darkness beginning to shroud him, black wisps emerging from the floor.

With one more scream, he shoulder-charged the wall, and he was free.



BECKY, LOREN AND SUE screamed as the small cup flew across the room and smashed into the cupboard wall. They kicked at the Ouija board to distance themselves from the fright and regain some level of control in the mayhem.

“What do we do?” Becky screeched, the fear in her voice growing by the syllable.

Sue shook her head, unable to piece together a coherent sentence.

Loren raised a shaky finger and pointed over Becky’s shoulder. She screamed, the pitch and ferocity causing the three girls to jump and run out of the room.





THE MEMORIES SNAPPED into his mind like a rubber band. Every bad deed he undertook returned to him in startling clarity. Amongst scuffling feet, he caught sight of the newspaper on the floor, the front-page headline extending into the room: *Child Killer Christian Cooper Clay Executed*. The black bold letters anchored themselves in the moment

Christian grinned as he watched the young girls dart out the door. Young. Tasty. He liked it when they ran.

Rubbing his hands together, an evil smirk grew on his face.  
He had some killing to do.

# League



“WAITING,” THE OLD MAN muttered. “Always making us wait.”

He eased back into the soft leather armchair, sipped his drink, and gazed at the solitary orange flame in the fireplace. The world had become a whole lot colder in recent times and that transcended into the room with unsettling ease.

“Unacceptable,” he continued, running a hand through his white beard. “Wouldn’t you agree, Allah?” He turned his head to the matching armchair.

Allah’s skin was as dark as the sun-kissed cliffs and as smooth as the shifting desert sands. Lost in his own imaginary world, he closed his dark eyes in response. He took a deep breath and when he released it, seemed to sink even further into his chair.

“To tell you the truth, Jehovah, I’m enjoying the break from the never-ending stream of prayers and offerings,” he said in his native tongue.

Jehovah lifted his glass towards his rival. “Amen to that.”

From nowhere, the heat in the room grew, fireplace intensified, and a whisper seeped into the room, enveloping its residents.

“Jehovah .... Allah ....”

Jehovah sighed. “For the love of us, Lucifer, there is no need for your particular brand of parlour tricks here.”

The whisper turned into a snicker that ended with a screech so loud it would have made mortal man’s ears bleed. There was a flash of colour and a gust of fabric as Lucifer appeared in her assigned seat closest to the flames. Calm returned and she sat back, crossed her long, stockinged legs, and materialised a cigarette that glowed bright red when she placed it against her lips.

“Good evening, gentlemen,” she said with a wink and puff of smoke that arced to the ceiling in a crackle of white noise.

Jehovah sat his glass on the mahogany table that separated each of them. He regarded her long jet-black hair that framed her porcelain skin and bright, green eyes. “While I appreciate your façade, and all niceties aside, Lucifer, we’d rather understand why we’re here and where the other deities are.”

Lucifer expelled more smoke, with the souls of those long past regressing to the roof and disappearing. “I have a proposition for you ... for both of you, and one that doesn’t concern itself with the, how do you say, less significant divinities amongst us.”

“That doesn’t answer the question,” Jehovah said. “Management will not be impressed with this.”

Lucifer held up her long, middle finger, showing her black nail polish. “Firstly, my response does answer your question.” She extended her pointer. “And Secondly, Management is cognisant of this assembly.”

Jehovah sat back and stroked his beard. Allah slowly blinked and ran a hand over his chin. They both considered that last remark. That Management entrusted Lucifer, of all gods, to coalesce the divinities in such a fashion was not only concerning, it was also intriguing.

“What is this proposition you speak of,” Allah said. “Let us hear it to reject it, and go about our business.”

The cigarette disintegrated as Lucifer clasped her hands and placed them on her knee.

“One year,” she stated. “One year under my reign. Three hundred and sixty-five days with only me at the helm.”

Jehovah guffawed at the suggestion, his laugh sending a shock wave around the room. Whilst the furniture shook, the response did little to shift the smile from Lucifer’s face.

“Preposterous,” Allah said evenly.

“Absurd,” Jehovah added, wiping a tear from the corner of his eye. “You? At the helm? Alone? Management can’t be serious! The streets would turn red with blood!”

“Blood?” Lucifer retorted. “Really? Do you dare talk to me about blood? Look at what’s happening now, what’s been happening for the past two thousand years. Death and destruction, all in your names. For you *and* against you. So, don’t you dare point a finger in my direction when you two claim to be all high and mighty.”

Jehovah opened his mouth to speak but had no reply. Allah stared at the table, searching for a response, searching for an answer. None came.

Lucifer continued as she held up her hands. “Now, I’m not saying I haven’t profited from all of that, from all of your so-called holy wars. I mean, we all have, but just to be clear, I have not caused it.”

Allah said, “You have not caused it because we, the Light, stop you. We hold you in check. We protect the mortals.”

“Oh, Allah, darling,” Lucifer said, a sliver of sympathy entering her voice. “You can spin that story all day long.” She sat forward. “But the facts are this. Your rubrics that all can be forgiven, no matter what they do, is killing you guys. And I’m not kidding, it’s literally killing you. People are getting away with anything and everything because whatever they do, you’ll still let them in your respective pearly gates. Mortals don’t need forgiveness; they need fear and panic. They need to know there are actual consequences for their actions. They need a vengeful god.”

Jehovah seized his drink from the table and sat back. He swallowed the remainder of the contents. “You’re lying. Management would never agree to such a horrendous thing.”

“And yet they have,” Lucifer countered with a smile. With a wave of her hands, a single piece of parchment appeared and fluttered down to the table. She spun the page so the two immortals could see the marking at the top, a stamp in bold letters that read: [Endorsed by Management].

Lucifer materialised a ballpoint pen and set it down next to the contract. "Your dogma is killing their realm, and you know as well as I, that when our followers die, so do we."

Jehovah and Allah sat still, unable to respond to such accusations.

Lucifer sat back in her chair. "Come on guys, a year off! Think of everything you could do when you are aren't troubled by the incessant demands of mortals."

Lucifer exchanged glances with both men who seemed to consider the proposition, contemplating the outcomes of such a course of action. She clasped her hands.

"Listen. Management is seeking a change, and they want this so bad they are willing to offer a sweetener." She smiled, her white teeth reflecting the flames. "I only need one signatory on the agreement. Just one. The first to sign will regain their status, their followers, their places of worship, blah blah blah, everything... *after* the year has expired."

"And the other?" Allah enquired, leaning forward. His eyes glistened. "The one who doesn't sign?"

Lucifer smirked. "The other is lost to history, a forgotten deity. Out of a job, as they say. Doomed to helplessly wander the realm with no fixed address - a transient, if you will."

Jehovah and Allah looked at each other, like two gunslingers at high noon settling a dispute.

"Only needs one signature," Jehovah said absentmindedly.

"So, if neither of us sign it, if we stick together, then the contract is null-and-void," said Allah. "It's worthless!"

"But if one of us signs, the other is lost forever."

"And in league with the devil," Allah added, narrowing his eyes at his opponent.

Silence.

Deafening silence.

Tensions raised.

A crackle from the fireplace went off like a starter's pistol.

Both dove for the pen.

My enemy's enemy.

Lucifer smiled, conjured another cigarette, and sat back to watch the show.

# Wet Works



THE TAPPING ON HIS arm was just as incessant as the gurgling stemming forth from the pipe. She didn't need to do anything; he could sense her presence. He could always predict the time she would appear, always deciding to come into the project at this point and share her worldly knowledge.

"What the hell are you doing?" she said. There was an edge to her soft voice.

He craned his neck around to look at her while maintaining adequate pressure on the pipe and stared at her with dull eyes.

"What the fuck does it look like I'm doing?"

She stood there with hands on hips, tapping her foot. He took in her long blond hair that draped her shoulders, the pale blue eyes that failed to radiate any emotion. Sometimes he didn't know whether he loved her or hated her.

"Well, I can see what you're *trying* to do," she retorted, not making any effort to hide her sarcasm. "But why are you holding your hands like that? Surely if you move your hands-"

"Hey," he yelled cutting her off. He spun around, removing a hand off the pipe to point a wet finger in her direction. The burbling sound increased followed by a hiss and he squeezed harder to make up for the lack of pressure. "You asked me to do this, remember? I've done this shit a hundred times before, I don't need your input. I know what the hell I'm doing. Your interruptions are really beginning to fuck up my chi." His words cut through her like a samurai blade.

"If you were so damn good," she countered, "then why is it making that god-awful noise? Christ, it sounds like it's about to rupture."

He swore and returned his attention to the pipe, focusing his anger through his tattooed arms. Squeezed. Crushed the life out of it. He hated her. Tried to remember when his feelings changed. He was sure it was somewhere between the first time they had sex and the first time she stood behind him giving directions. Grit his teeth trying to ignore her, but her advice was as unyielding as the sirens call.

“I’m just saying, using this would be quicker.” She extracted the tool from her belt and held it in front of his murderous eyes.

“Sure it would be,” he said through his teeth, “But there’s no skill in using that.”

“Yes, there is. See, you put it there, slide that, press this, pull that ...”

“Christ Nicky, I know how to use the fucking thing. I’ve used one before, but there’s a reason I’m not using it now.” He shook his head. “You just don’t get it, and you’ll never get it.”

“Jesus, keep your shit together, I’m just trying to help.”

“Well, it’s not helping.” He hung his head and chewed his lip. Dropped shoulders. Tension released. “In fact, do you know what, I’m done.” He stood and stretched his wet, tired arms. He stood in front of her and pointed at her face. “Every damn time I try to do something you’re there to give me your two cents and I’ve had enough. You’re always telling me where to go and what to do and I’ve had enough. You turn everything into some stupid argument and I’m sick of it. I’m done here and I’m done with you.”

Silence consumed the void. Then realisation. Silence. Which meant he had done the job. He turned back to the bath and she joined him at his side. They looked down at the pale face just below the surface of the water, wisps of white hair floated freely above a face contorted into a scream. Pale, dead eyes stared at the ceiling.

She threw an arm around him and pushed herself into his side. “See! I knew you could do it, honey.”

He spun away from her grasp and grabbed her by the shoulders. His face was an inch from hers. “I’ve got some advice for you,” he spat. “The



next time you want someone to kill your husband get some other sucker to do it, or better still, do it your god damn self.”

They stared into each other’s eyes, their mutual connection sparking once more. She pushed off her toes and their lips met for an instant. He grabbed her head and fiercely mashed his lips to hers, pushing his tongue inside her mouth.

Her eyes snapped open. The stinging roar of the gunshot crushed the silence.

He stepped back, grabbing at the bloody gaping hole in his stomach. His eyes went wide trying to understand what had just happened.

“You bitch,” he hissed between bloodied teeth.

He fell backwards into the bath, slamming the back of his head against the pristine white tiles. Sat there for a moment as life left him, and then he slowly slid sideways into the water, his crushed skull leaving a trail of blood on the wall. Ended up face down on top of his victim. Red clouds grew in the water.

She stood over him. “Appreciate the advice, honey,” she crooned. “And to be honest, I really don’t know what all the fuss is about.”

# Dawn



## PENNY

I watch Daddy stand at the window and stare off down the range. I huddle closer to the fire. It is our first in such a long time.

“Are you okay, Daddy? Are you gonna come sit near the fire?”

He says he’d like to, but he has to keep an eye out.

“Are they going to find us, Daddy? I don’t want to die.”

He says no one will ever find us and if they do, he won’t let them hurt us.

I watch him play with the ring on his finger. He twists it around. He slips it off and back on again.

“I miss Mommy,” I say.

He says he does too. It feels like forever since Mommy died, since she walked out the door and never came back.

My brother tells me to shut up or the monsters will come.

Daddy tells him to be quiet and concentrate on staying warm instead of antagonising his sister. I don’t know what antagonising means, but David stops talking and stares out the window.

There is a bleat, and Joey nestles into me. He’s my friend, my only friend. My brother says we will eat it one day when there is no food left. But Daddy tells him to be quiet again.

Hopefully we can go home soon.



## DAVID

I'm going to eat that damn goat one day. The way it always follows her around, pretending she's its momma, it's stupid. Besides, that damn noise it makes is gonna make them find us.

I get up from the fire and walk to the window. I stand next to Daddy, the pump-action shotgun leaning against the wall between us. I look at him. His dull eyes, his straggly beard. He looks like one of those crazy people he used to tell me about when Momma and Penny were sleepin'.

I look out the window, down the gravel road. "Whatcha lookin' at, Daddy?"

He says nothin', just keeps playin' with his wedding ring. He spins it on his finger, never takes it off.

"Do you think Momma is out there somewhere?"

"Somewhere," he grunted. But he didn't say any more.

I look out the window. "Sun's startin' to rise," I say. "You want me to put the fire out?"

Daddy nods.

I get the pail and pour it on the fire, making sure I get a few drops on Penny, just to annoy her. She complains as my dinner gets up and walks off, shakin' its rear legs. I poke my tongue out at her. Daddy tells us both to be quiet. He's tuggin' on that beard of his and the sight of it makes my stomach hurt.

Can't wait to get out of here so I can see my friends again.



## DADDY

Silence. I wish for silence. I tell them both to be quiet. Things got a whole lot quieter since the fourth bomb went off and that huge cloud of spores floated over the city. It's amazing how quiet it can be when a quarter of the population disappears off the face of the planet in the blink of an eye. But that was a long time ago, before we packed up and headed to the mountains. The reports suggested people should get to their

basements or bunkers. But I knew if we did that we would be trapped. Nowhere to go but up, where the monsters were. So, we took to higher ground. Found a little cottage with some staples and uninterrupted view-points on all sides. It's been quiet since we've been here.

I look down at the gun by my leg. The day Susie turned, the day I had to take her outside, haunts me, teases me.

*Do it again.*

Had to lie to the kids. Told them she had to go away and I didn't know where she was. Some secrets are easy to bury, others won't leave you alone.

I look to the east, at the sun rising over the dirt track, it's rays trying to break through the clouds. If any of the extermination crews see the smoke, we'll all be dead. But this high up, this out of the way, this much cloud cover, surely, they can't see it.

*They are coming.*

I twist the ring on my finger, asking for forgiveness, requesting we remain hidden. They needed warmth, they needed something other than blankets and cold floors of an abandoned shack. I am failing my children.

Then movement stole my attention. And then I'm running.

"Quick, they're coming!" I hiss at the kids. I don't know why I'm trying to stay quiet. They've found us, caught our scent. I might as well yell at the top of my lungs. The kids don't move. Their faces drop and I can hear their hearts stop. I grab them. We bustle into the kitchen.

"Get in the box!"

Lift the lid and they climb in amongst the last of our starch supplies, Penny dragging her goat with her. Close the lid and try to spread out a table cloth on top but my hands are shaking. I put down a plate, a bottle, a bible.

*They will know.*

"Keep that damn goat quiet!" I yelled.

My gun. Where's my gun? I go back to the window. Three cars now, parked out front in a neat line. I can make out the silhouettes. Six men

in total. The extermination crews. They've seen the smoke. They'll kill us all. I mentally count off the shells in my meagre munitions.

*Not enough.*

Enough for two things. Only two things.

*Do it.*

A tear is falling. I can't let this happen.

I go back to the box, lift the lid enough to slide the barrel through the opening.



### **SHERIFF BLAKE**

I roll the car to a stop in front of the farmhouse. It looks deserted from where I'm sitting. The last on my run. I sure as shit hope we find something here, or else me and the boys have wasted the last twelve hours looking for survivors.

I get out of the four-wheel-drive and click off the safety on my weapon. People tend to get a little touchy when we roll up at their front door, unannounced, without so much as a warning, even if you're carrying good news. The rest of my crew are standing in front of their respective cars, and I signal for three of them to head round back. They take off like hounds chasing a fox, their guns in their hands ready to take fire. Step up on the porch and reach the doorknob.

*BANG!*

I back away, cowering from the noise. I expect shattering glass or splintering wood, but receive none of that. I edge over to the window and peek around the corner. There's a man standing in the kitchen with a shotgun in his mouth.

I call out.

*BANG!*

God damn it.

I shoulder my way in the front door at the same time as my boys are coming in the rear. We meet in the kitchen and stand over the body. I retrieve my radio from my belt.

“Despatch, we got another body. Just like the others.”

*“We’ll send a recovery team to your position. Stand by.”*

I look down at where the victim’s head used to be. “What the hell is making everybody so damn crazy?”

And then I hear a muffled bleat coming from the dining table.

# Forgotten



MISS JENKINS PUSHED open the heavy steel door, the rusted hinges finally giving way under the pressure. The metal on metal groan echoed below and disappeared into the darkness. Jenkins stumbled forward and composed herself. Strands of grey hair had escaped their bonds and she tucked them behind her ear. The stale air smacked her in the face. It had been a long time since she had been down there, a long time since anyone had been down there.

“You found it down there?” she said.

“Yeah,” came the voice, small and unwilling.

Jenkins turned to William Bourke, who still stood beyond the doorway, his gaze down, his fingers fidgeting. She looked at him. His brown vest and shorts, tight against his frame, his dirty knees above socks that refused to stay up, his scuffed black shoes.

She felt a level of comfort in his fear. Wished for a mirror at that moment, if only to see how big her smirk was. He might have been the school bully, but in that moment, he was the smallest student in the school. Pale, minimal, insignificant.

“Well, come on then. Show me where you found it.”

She ushered William to the stairs and he hesitated. She sighed and took the lead. “Very well, follow me, William. There is nothing to fear here.”

Her shoes clanged on the old metal steps, the sound reverberating through the darkness. A few steps down she paused and turned. The faint glow of a tired bulb somewhere overhead cast her face in a sickly yellow. William clung to the railing and peered out into the gloom.

“I still don’t know why I have to go down there.”

Jenkins turned and looked down the stairs, the abyss swallowing them. She grabbed the pendant that hung around her neck, a dark stone with intricate markings, something that made its way into her possession by accident, yet she couldn't let it go.

"Detention, William," she said. "I thought I had made that absolutely clear. Actions have consequences."

Jenkins continued her journey down the steps. She didn't bother checking to see if William was following, she could feel his presence behind her, she could feel his uncertainty.

At the bottom of the stairs in a purple gloom that reminded her of midnight, Jenkins stretched out her arm to a switch. Memories were already flooding back to her and reaching out for the light was as much muscle memory as anything,

One by one, decayed banks of lights clicked on, illuminating a path between stacks of old chairs and tables, desks, lamps, filing cabinets and other school equipment from a bygone era. Collectors would have a field day down here, but the school was not short of money, so instead of selling it, they sealed it down here in the archives, a forgotten wing of the prestigious institution.

Jenkins walked forward, William in her shadow.

"I wasn't scared, you know ... when I read the letter... Just that I thought I should tell someone."

"I see," replied Jenkins. "Did you read all of it?"

William shook his head. "I read enough of it," he said, as he peered down the inky black tributaries that flowed off the main walkway.

Jenkins sensed the growing terror. "Just stay with me, William. This will all be over before you know it."

She stopped. To her right stood several naked and faceless mannequins. They were brown, covered in dust, with various missing appendages. To her left was a storage rack stacked with overhead projectors in various shapes and sizes. At the intersection was a full size stuffed brown bear. It held a threatening pose, claws spread, mouth open, ready



to attack. A remnant from an old Principal that wanted to strike fear into students that found their way into his office. Jenkins first order as Principal was to clean out the relics and produce a more welcoming environment. She did, after all, have her own way of punishing those that broke the rules.

Jenkins pointed to her left, down the shadowy path. "Down here?" She didn't get a response so she looked down. William was nodding slowly.

"Do we have to?"

"I'm afraid so, William. I had been waiting for you to come and get me. You were down here for a while."

Jenkins pulled out her mobile phone and used it as a torch. She remembered this pathway used to be lit, which is why she chose it in the first place. At the end, there was a steel door built into the wall. She never understood the purpose of it, but it mattered not.

There, wedged in between the door and the wall, was a yellowed envelope. Jenkins reached for it.

"Wait," William said. "I've shown you. Can we go now?"

Jenkins smiled. "Very soon."

She pulled the envelope free. The scrawl on the front read: 'To whom it may concern'. She turned it over, the seal coming free easily, the glue long ago evaporating, and pulled out the single sheet of paper. She held up the light and read the letter out loud, the hand-written words coming to life.

*"You are here because you've found my body and the letter that outlines my confession. To whoever you are, I am sorry. I'm sorry for what you'll see, I'm sorry for how it will affect you. But I'm not sorry for doing it. Never sorry for that. This was my only way, the only way anybody would listen. I am sick of being bullied, and he was the worst of them. Actions have consequences, and Billy Bourke got what was coming to him. I hope you can find comfort in that, just as I did. Signed, Jenny Jenkins"*

Jenkins looked up at the boy as her memories became visions. She recalled how she lured him down there, to the forgotten part of the school. How he pushed her, over and over. She ran, deep into the yellow glow, his footsteps just behind. And when she came to a dead-end, she swung, the knife pushing into the soft of his belly with surprising ease, his forward momentum aiding entry. Shock and confusion. Redness of his hands. The whimper, the shortness of breath. She watched him die. The hardest part was getting him into the wall and sealing it shut.

After leaving the note and running home, she laid on her bed, dangling the knife above her own stomach. She looked over to the second letter she had written. She took a deep breath and pulled the knife down. The knife stopped a centimetre above her bare skin. The one realisation had hit her. She didn't feel guilty over her actions, she didn't feel pain, she didn't feel remorse. She felt happy. They would never find him.

Miss Jenkins looked at the young William and smiled. "It's time."

She heaved open the metal door.

"No!" William shouted.

The door protested before eventually giving way.

Dark shadows erupted forth from the opening and circled above William. Long fingers peeled away from transparent fists. William reached for Miss Jenkins, but his grasps went right through her. He stopped to look at his own hand, noted how it faded in certain light.

"Miss Jenkins," he whimpered. "I'm sorry."

She looked down at him longingly. "It's a little late for that, William."

He screamed as the apparitions grabbed him and dragged him into the dark.

"Goodbye, William," Jenkins said as she watched William disappear into the gloom. "For good this time."

# Styx



HE ASKED ME WHAT MY name was ... again. I wasn't sure why he wasn't paying attention when I was talking, perhaps preoccupied with the task at hand. I mean, when you call someone like me to a place like his, either you've done some serious shit, or someone you know has. I told him I go by several names, given to me by people who feared me, those who worshipped me, and by those who bid for my talents. He considered this for a moment, and the pained look on his face gave my heart palpitations. Styx, I eventually told him, rubbing my forehead. Just call me Styx.

He asked me if I was serious, that I would do as the ad implied. Of course, I told him. Anything less would be humbug. He continued to ask the odd inane question, in between sips of some liquid he had poured himself when we sat down. It felt like he was stalling. Was it the money? I looked around at the antique furniture that filled his library. Why, the seat which I found myself perched was worth more than I made last year alone. So, no, it wasn't about the money.

Then it must be about the victim. I don't know why people squirm at this point. I mean, to have a seating with me is big step, a leap for some. And surely when people are past that point, there is no going back. I asked him if he wanted to reconsider and he said, no. He added what needed to happen, needs to happen.

I nodded and asked him who it was that needed despatching. He dithered again. Usually I would produce a gun or a knife or something to hurry the conversation along, but the old codger was growing on me. His thick glasses, thinning white hair, bulbous nose and bright red bowtie had lulled me into complacency.

He asked me again if I was capable of undertaking the tasks required. I sighed, and I could tell that he knew he was pissing me off. Look, I told him, maybe you want to think this over, consider a few options before signing on the dotted line.

He told me forthrightly that he was ready to proceed, so I invited him to share the name with me. He leant forward and spoke in a whisper. I wasn't sure who he was hiding this information from, given we were the only two people in the room. Regardless, I too leant forward.

He gave me three names and the reasons. The first one was his, that he was calling for his own death. Now, this isn't a common request, but it's not like I haven't heard it before. Timmy Parks on death row in Texas, Reggie Whatts amidst a paedophile investigation, Macy Perkinson in the throngs of one of her psychotic episodes, and Susie Florence from the depths of her depression, just to name a few. They had opted for assistance because they couldn't do it themselves. I was more than happy to offer my expertise in the matter. Especially because they were paying my fee. And the customer is always right. Who was I to argue.

But there was just one thing, he said, but he needed to show me. He stood and unbuttoned his shirt. People had often requested a last this or a last that, some final prize before their departure. I never obliged, mainly because I have a reputation to uphold. Regardless, in this case, I told the old man that there was no amount of money that he could offer that would satisfy me in order to satisfy him.

Alas, it didn't stop him, nor slow him down. He continued to disrobe in front of me. A small forest of grey accumulated between his sagging pectorals and his round belly fell over his belt. His face turned red as he strained, pain emanated forward. A grey feather appeared over his shoulder, and then another one, and then another until wings had fully extended. This was something that I had never seen before. I mean, I had read about them, sure, but to see one in the flesh was astounding.

He told me he was broken and that he needed it all to be over. I was curious. I queried him how he came to be. He told me he fell from the

heaven's quite some time ago and had been dying ever since, even though it was impossible for him to do so. Said he was sick of the human savagery, the hurt, the pain, the suffering. Been doomed to experience it all forever, without any reprieve.

I told him that I could not, in fact, do what he had asked. Not because I lacked the skill or talent, just that I lacked the fortitude to dispatch such a creature. He pleaded and begged, mentioned how he had been driven to the depths of despair to watch humankind crumble around him without the ability to step in and do anything about it. He had lost his will, his spark, and hence his feathers had too, lost their colour.

I asked him if he knew what it would mean, to dispatch him. He nodded, understood that because of his expulsion, he could not return, and unfortunately left just one alternative. He said anything would be better than staying where he was. There was no talking him around, nothing I could do. He was resolute in his decision and ready to accept the consequences. I accepted the duty but declined the bounty. I told him I could not possibly accept payment for such a task. He gave a small smile like he felt sorry for me and awkwardly lay down on the couch.

I retrieved my ceremonial knife from my satchel, you know, the one with the intricate handle and engraved with the name of Him. I plunged it deep into his chest. As I broke the skin, a shaft of light erupted out of him. Within a few seconds, he was gone. Evaporated into nothingness.



“HOLY SHIT,” THE MAN said as he swallowed his fourth Tequila shot. “That is one hell of a story.”

I nodded, raised a glass, gave a silent toast, and threw it back.

“I’ve got to ask, who were the other names?”

“Sorry?”

“You said he told you three names, and the first one was his.”

“Ah, yes. He did.”

“Well? Just give me one! Who was another person? I’m dying to know!”

I downed another shot and looked at him. “You.”

The knife sank into his back with ease. He stayed alive just long enough for me to tell him why.



THE ASHEN LOOK ON HER face was priceless. Her hands jittered as she lit a cigarette on the third attempt.

“Why are you telling me this?”

“Because,” I started, “He wanted you to feel the same fear those children had before they burnt. He may have been unable to do anything to you, but I don’t have the same constraints as he.”

I stood.

She cried. I couldn’t tell if it was for them, her crime, or for herself.

It didn’t matter.

Blood would spill.

The ledger would balance.

For I am Styx.

# Insider



SPECIAL AGENT SEAN Stone eased his car to a stop in the allotted bay and killed the engine. His phone rang. He sighed, yet answered it with the crisp effectiveness of a seasoned professional. “What?!”

The reply was a tone followed by a robotic voice. “Eight, six, one, two, five, seven.”

Sean pressed a button on his phone, the screen awash with a solid block of colour. He pressed the device to his ear. “Purple.”

“Hold the line,” the voice instructed.

“Daaaad.” The voice in the backseat interrupted his train of thought. He had forgotten where he was. “Just a second, Aly. I’ve just got to take this call. Talk with Hannah for a few minutes.”

Sean couldn’t understand how he became the chaperone for the evening’s event. Figured his wife had gotten him in a low moment. A perfectly placed question in the dying minutes of a football game or movie climax where his response was, “Yes, whatever”. The next thing he knew he was taking his daughter and her friend to a concert to see a teen pop icon who tomorrow was likely to be in rehab with a cocaine addiction. Fantastic role model.

“This is the Operator,” the voice on the phone said. “Operation Firebrand has movement.”

“Of course, it has,” he replied, and pinched the bridge of his nose. The operation was a bust. Originally intended to identify and suppress targeted terrorist attacks, the clandestine operation had returned precisely squat. Unreliable evidence, fake news, bad interrogations. None of it leading to anything even remotely considered a hostile act.

O: “Information is coming through slowly.”

“Dad, can we go now?”

O: “Large amounts of explosives.”

He viewed the two girls in the rear vision mirror. “Just a minute.”

“We’ll stay together,” Hannah added, “I promise we’ll behave until you come to the seats.”

“Yeah,” his daughter protested. “We’re gonna miss the beginning.”

He rubbed his temples. Interrogating terrorists was easier than trying to negotiate with two teens with backstage passes. He sighed again and checked his watch.

“Fine, just-” but they were gone, his remark punctuated with twin slams of the rear doors.

O: “The car is blue.”

“Thank you, Mister Operator, but that is not helpful for me. Can you please call someone else?”

O: “Everyone is aware. The information is coming through slowly. Hold the line.”

He shut his eyes and laid his head back on the seat. He guessed he shouldn’t be surprised. That particular night there were major events all up and down the east coast, three in his city alone, not counting the pimply-faced, one hit wonder he was about to spend a few hours with.

O: “The device is in the trunk.”

He thought about the process he had to endure to get his vehicle into the building, the security on high alert. Tickets, entry code and his credentials deemed barely sufficient to get him past the security checkpoint.

“Well, Operator, I’ve got to say they’ve got no chance of getting close to any event tonight. If the others are anything like this, they’ll need someone on the inside.”

O: “First letter on the plate is ‘L.’”

He rolled his head to the right. A dark blue police cruiser parked in a loading zone. Uniformed officer next to the vehicle, pacing, a hand to his ear. The first letter on the plate staring at him, shouting at him. Kicked his door open and stepped out onto the concrete.



The officer looked up, then away. He immediately finished his call and started to march off towards an exit.

“Excuse me?!” Sean called out.

The officer stopped dead in his tracks. Turned slowly. “I’m sorry, but I’ve gotta go,” he said, pointing to the exit sign.

Sean gazed into the officer’s eyes. He had spent years questioning criminals and could tell when someone was lying or just bending the truth. Subtle differences. Micro movements. Dilations, constrictions. The officer was scared. Fear etched over his face.

“I’m going to need to see in the trunk of your cruiser.”

The officer jittered. “And who are you?”

Sean flashed his badge and repeated his request.

The officer swore and slowly moved to the back of his vehicle. “You know my sergeant’s going to be pissed, right?”

“Just do it.”

Sean backed away, one hand on the phone at his ear, the other wrapped firmly around the handle of his Glock. He tensed as the officer lifted the trunk door. Nothing. Nothing other than the piles of crap uniformed officers keep in their trunks. Kits, gloves, equipment, clothes. No explosives.

O: “Last number on the plate is ‘9’”

Sean let out a sigh. The officer was still dancing, shifting his weight from foot to foot.

“What’s wrong with you?”

“I gotta take a piss and it’s my shift at the gate.”

O: “Explosion activation through vehicle ignition.”

Sean waved him off and started back to his own vehicle, considering if he could be bothered to write a report. Stopped dead in his tracks. First letter ‘L’. Last number ‘9’.

Blue car.

His car.

You would need an inside man.

No. Impossible.

O: "Name coming through shortly."

He couldn't breathe. It couldn't be. Popped the trunk. His heartbeat rang in his ears. You would need an inside man.

O: "The name is..."

The line went dead. He slammed the lid. Got to get out of here. Far from here.

Jumped in the car. Inside man.

Keyed the ignition. Brain a jumble.

Activation through ignition. Turned the key.

# Gavel



THE GAVEL LANDED SQUARELY onto the sound block, the resulting connection sending a crack around the interior of the courtroom. I shut my eyes and fall back into the wooden chair, the echo drinking my strength.

The judge gave his ruling in its concise structure but I wasn't listening, I was beyond listening. My life as I knew it was over, forever smeared, like black paint palmed across a white wall. Tomorrow I'll be in all the newspapers, my face a permanent marker on history, a blight on our society. Years from now, kids will Google the crime, the trial, the judgement, and know it was me.

Every breath seems like an hour and the guilt tears at my chest like a wild beast, the sweat starting to erupt out of my pores, every breath catching in my throat. My first time in a courtroom will surely be my last, a trouble-free upbringing leading me to my greatest regret.

As I think about the steps that landed me in this mess, a numbness courses through my body. I'm not sure I have the strength to stand when I am ordered, although I'm positive someone will haul me to my feet when the time comes to leave on my walk of shame. The crowd will boo and heckle me and if I was really lucky, someone would aim a bullet in my direction instead of just threats.

I squeeze my eyes shut as the screaming of the crowd explodes around me. The gavel comes down multiple times followed by a stern warning, but the masses ignore it. The world will hear what they have to say and no one will stop them. I have caused this madness. I don't want this life.

“I take it back,” I scream to myself, “I change my mind.” But my pleas go unanswered. There will be no miracle that saves me, no one there to forgive me. Sickness fills my stomach and I can feel life wash away from my face.

The man sitting next to me places a hand on my shoulder and leans in close to me, hoping the shortened distance will fight through the raucous, that the brief exchange of words will somehow soothe my racing heart.

“Are you okay?”

I open my mouth but don't know what to say, what could I say? The evidence was indisputable, the witnesses solid, the arguments delivered with as much ferocity as a lioness hunting its prey.

I can hear the heavy footsteps of the guard approaching now, the jangle of keys, the odour of tuna on his breath surrounding me, enveloping me. I am lost in the abyss of sensory overload.

I use the table to pull myself to my feet and turn to the crowd. Fingers are being thrown in my direction with a silenced barrage. Another smash of the gavel rings in my ears and I attempt to straighten my tie, swaying unsteadily on the spot like a drunk.

I think back to the last minute, last week, last month when this damn trial began. How I wished it was different. Further now to last year. Every decision I've made in the last five years, ten years, all a stepping stone to the next fork in the road. But it doesn't matter how much thinking I do, nothing will change the fact that it took the jury less than four hours for them to decide their verdict and my seal my fate.

If I wasn't hated before, I am now. And as much as I would like to blame the jurors, the world will forever know me as the lawyer that got Max Burton off a murder charge that was so cut and dry, so rock solid that one reporter once stated that 'a monkey could try this case and still convict that monster'. I am the one that spun the truth into a wound ball of possibilities and then stretched it out again to make an alternate real-

ity. And it will be all of us who have to live with the fact that a heartless killer is on the streets.

I look over to the grieving family. Their hugs and cries stab at me. The prosecutor stares at me and I can't tell whether its hatred or worry or her own regret.

I slide my briefcase off the table and wade through the masses, a security guard in front to hold them back, my client close behind, eager to taste freedom.

He may be a free man, but I am now locked in a cage I have created for myself.

I will forever rue the day that Max walked into my office and I accepted his case.

## Lure



“DID YOU DO IT?”

“Yes, did you?”

Billy stared hard at the two birds. Crow’s black feathers glistened in the sunlight, its dark eyes reflected the world. Owl, its own wise face displayed knowledge unfathomable by man.

“Did you do it?” Crow repeated.

“Yes,” added Owl. “Did you?”

Billy looked down at his hands as guilt spread across his young face. Too innocent to lie, too enraptured to tell the truth, too young to know the difference.

“No,” he mumbled, entwining his fingers, hoping the birds might forget what they had asked him to do so he could talk about what it was like to soar through the clouds.

“Why not?” asked Crow.

“You want us to like you, don’t you Billy?”

Their voices carried levels of disappointment that struck Billy’s chest. He had let them down. They had asked him to do something and he couldn’t, he just couldn’t. He pouted.



“LEAVE HIM ALONE,” MRS Shelby squawked.

Melanie looked at the old lady. “Pardon?”

Mrs Shelby blinked, then shook her head. “Nothing dear, just my age.” She placed her frail hand on top of Melanie’s and squeezed. “How are you doing, dear? How are you holding up?” Her voice was crackly,

like trying to tune the radio onto a station, her mind as absent as the playlist of white noise.

Melanie smiled, mournful yet thankful. "I'm okay," she croaked. She lied, but what else are you supposed to say in those situations? "It's been tough, on everyone, more so on Billy." She sipped her tea, the liquid as bland and lifeless as her life now felt. Disconnection was prevalent, the doctor had told her. As common as a cold in winter, as necessary as taxes at the end of the financial year. It was the emotionless rationalism that she clung to. That and Billy.

"He loved it when his father came home," Melanie said as she stared off into the distance, her words beginning to waver. "Billy would watch the clock in the lounge room, counting the minutes. When he heard the sound of a key in the lock, he would run to the front door." She dabbed at her eyes with a tissue.

Mrs Shelby slid a plate of stale, oatmeal cookies over to Melanie, and smiled. "Eat something, dear. You need to eat something."



"IT'S JUST THAT..." Billy began.

"What, Billy?" Owl interrupted.

"It's just that... mum caught me and said I shouldn't. She said I shouldn't play with knives. Said they were dangerous."

"Your mother doesn't love you, Billy," Crow said. "Doesn't love you like we do. You believe that, don't you Billy? That we love you?"

"Sure," Billy said, his voice small.

"Do you want to fly away with us, Billy?" Owl asked.

"Yes."

"Do you want to play with our brothers and sisters above the clouds, Billy?" Crow asked.

"Yes," Billy responded. His voice louder now, more resilient, surer of the answer.

“Do you want us to take you to your father, Billy? We can do that,” Owl pressed.

“Yes!” Billy screamed. “I want to see daddy. More than anything in the world.”

“Then you know what you have to do ... for us ... for you ... for him.”



MRS JENKINS SLURPED her tea, her false teeth clicking on the side of the china cup. “Do they know what happened, dear?”

Melanie sighed. “No, still don’t. They think it was a heart attack. I mean, it’s been months, surely they could figure out what happened.” She pulled at a tissue, ripping it into small pieces. “All the police could tell me was the car left the road and hit a tree. No sign of braking, no problems with the car, no bad weather. It just... doesn’t make sense.”

“Sometimes, dear, life doesn’t make sense... like the pyramids or Stonehenge.”

“Not knowing is so hard. He was so fit and healthy, no signs that would suggest anything. It was like his soul just lifted out of his body never to return.”

“I remember when Bernie went. He told the doctor to kiss his behind and he gave me the finger. Stubborn little bastard. I’m sure the devil would have invited him right in for tea and biscuits.” She pushed the plate closer to Melanie. “Eat something, dear. You need to eat something.”



“BUT I DON’T WANT TO hurt her,” Billy protested.

“You must, Billy,” Crow urged.

“You must burn her,” Owl added. “Burn them all.”

“But... my mum.”



“We will look after her,” Owl comforted. “We will protect her.”

“If you do as we say,” Crow cried. “If you follow our directions. If you follow us.”

“We know where she keeps the matches. The top drawer in the kitchen.”

“And there is clear liquid in the laundry.”

“Do it. Tonight. When she is sleeping. And we can all fly together.”

“We love you, Billy. Our brothers and sisters are waiting to play with you. Your father is waiting for you. He is waiting for you.”

“Tonight, Billy.”

“Do it tonight.”

“Alright!” Billy screamed. “I’ll do it.”

“Good,” Owl hooted.

“Excellent,” Crow squawked.



MRS SHELBY BIT DOWN on the old biscuit, crumbs falling from her dry lips onto the countertop. “Excellent?”

“Sorry?” Melanie asked, her cup now empty.

“Oh, I thought you said ‘excellent’. Well, yes, I mean, I have been baking for a little while now.” She pushed the plate into Melanie’s saucer. “Eat something, dear.”

“It’s okay, really.” Melanie looked into the older woman’s vacant sky-blue eyes. “Thank you.”

“For what, dear?”

“For this. For coming around. For talking ... for letting me talk.”

Mrs Shelby smiled. “No problems whatsoever, dear.” She looked over at the small child sitting at the kitchen table. “How’s your little boy doing?”

Melanie looked over at her son, pangs of guilt lashing at her entire being. Pins and needles ran over her body. “He just hasn’t been the same since the car accident.”

“Still not talking?”

“No, not a word,” Melanie replied, crossing her arms. “Doctors don’t know what’s wrong. He doesn’t seem to have any trauma. The doctors think he could snap out of it at any time. Then there’s...” She trailed off.

“What is it, dear?”

“I caught him with a knife the other day.” She shrugged her shoulders. Didn’t know what else to say.

As if sensing the conversation was about him, Billy looked over to his mother with a blank stare. Melanie forced a smile and waved. Billy didn’t respond, like she wasn’t even there, and returned his fixation to what was in front of him.

“I just don’t get it,” Melanie continued to her guest. “He just stares at that photo of those two birds all day long. I just don’t know what to do.”

“Burn it!” Mrs Shelby said coldly.

Melanie shook her head. “Excuse me?”

“Mmm?” Mrs Shelby replied. “Oh, nothing, dear. Have a biscuit. You need to eat something. Or better yet, why don’t you go have a nap. I can look after him. Sort things out for you.”

“Sort things out?”

“Mmm? Nothing dear. Have a rest. Things are always better after a rest.”

Melanie looked longingly over at her son, wishing for anything that could bring him back to her. “I wonder what he’s thinking.”



YOU ARE GOING TO DIE.

You will burn.

We will all burn.

I am with the birds now.

# Moments



THE SIGNAL IS GIVEN, the lever is pulled, and gravity yanks the guillotine down. It is at this moment that time stands still, the world stands still. Everything takes an eternity; a breath, a gasp, a falling leaf. The noise the crowd makes is drowned out by my own breathing, waiting for the inevitable. For life to end.

I look over the crowd that has gathered to bear witness. They freely come in their best attire, yet their eyes tell a different story. Some are clenched shut, others are downcast. Only a few remain on me, only a few have the constitution to see it through. A little girl, maybe of eight years, is turned into her mother, her hands pushed against her ears. I see her, ever so slowly, release the grasp of her eye and through a slit, take in the horrific image. That is who I feel sorry for. The young, the innocent. This grand event should not be used as a deterrent for the virtuous, it should be for the people who decided this was the best form of punishment, to hold them to account for their decisions. They have put me in this horrid situation. This is what I think about in the final moments.

If I turn my head just so, I can see the sky between spires. Fantastical white shapes moving through a blue expanse, a light breeze pushing them to a new destination. If I look closely enough, I can make out a rabbit. A white, billowy rabbit, hopping through the lavender fields, nose twitching as it sniffs the air, picking up on the scent of a farmer's garden. Run little rabbit, hop away. Get your food, cheeky little rabbit. This is what I think about in the final moments.

I think about how I came to be here, and what crimes have landed people in the stock, awaiting their execution. Is murdering someone sufficient enough crime to render them doomed? I would think so. What if

they murdered someone in order to steal food for their starving family? Killing one to save many. Does the intent lessen the gravitas of the action? I guess that's why they have people to make these kinds of difficult decisions. Do they sleep at night? Are they here now? Will they watch as the cold metal falls? This is what I think about in the final moments.

I think about my family. I don't know if they are out there, a few amongst the masses, like a lighthouse overseeing the craggy rocks. I know this will be hard for my children, seeing me up here, on display for all to see. I hope they are not here. I should not be remembered for these final moments. Maybe I'll be forgotten as soon as the blade hits the base, and life extinguished. Should a man's existence be wrapped up in moments? Does one wrong decision define a person, does it capture every element of their being? This is what I think about in the final moments.

What happens to your conscience after death? Does it simply fade like a candle without wax, or is it shattered like throwing a stone through a window? Does it go to heaven? I wonder if heaven exists and who might be there when I arrive. Will they look at this and tsk, shake their heads solemnly and bid me farewell? Have I lost all my rights to a peaceful afterlife? Am I to be relegated to flame and rock? This is what I think about in the final moments.

The blade thwacks into its wooden scabbard, overpowering the wet crunch of slicing through flesh and bone. I close my eyes.

I can smell it now. The wretch, the faeces, the blood, the bile. All at once it is overpowering, and I screw my nose up to keep the impurities out. I have smelt death and it is far worse than the worst possible smell in this world. It gets under your fingernails, in your hair. It's there when you bathe, and there when you try to sleep. Lingers, like the harsh aroma of rotten meat left out in the sun. Washes over me at the moment and I try to think of my babies when they were first born, or the wildflowers the rabbit was hopping through, or the way the morning smelt when I held my wife and told her I loved her. This is what I think about in the final moments.

The thump of a weight being dropped into the basket wisps with the echo of the blades decent and the hushed gasp of the crowd. Were they now regretting their decision? I suppose it is a little late for their remorse. The deed has been done, and there is no coming back from it.

I remove my hand from the lever and look down into the basket. For a second I am sure the eyes blink as if there is recognition. Fear. Hatred. Sadness. And then the vacancy arrives, and it sees through me as if I do not exist. Blood oozes from the clean incision into the basket, and I wonder who is marked to clean that, whose responsibility will it be to ensure the next head can fall cleanly into it. I feel sick, the burden of the situation falling on my shoulders.

I have killed someone. I received the signal; I pulled the lever.

This is what I will think about in the days and weeks to follow.





## **About the Author**

Writing for over a decade but just getting into self-publishing, I enjoy any story that makes me second guess what the hell is going on. When I'm not writing in Brisbane, I'm facilitating workshops, MCing conferences, and keynote speaking all over Australia.

Read more at <https://kennethjamesallen.com/>.



