

# *Just Write*

Gloucester County Library System

Logan Township Branch

Writers' Group Selections

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Freeholder Library Liaison, Lyman Barnes



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# **Sparkle And Shine**

**By Marian M. Fay**

Gold, silver, bronze, and green metallic paint  
In the sunlight shines brightly

When we smile from the heart  
In the Son's light our eyes sparkle and shine indelibly

Gold, blue, silver, red, orange, pink, green, and purple glitter glue  
In the sunlight sparkles brightly

When we smile from the heart  
In the Son's light our eyes sparkle and shine indelibly

Diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires and citrines  
In the sunlight sparkle and shine brightly

When we smile from the heart  
In the Son's light our eyes sparkle and shine indelibly

Ponds, lakes, streams, rivers and oceans  
In the rising and setting sunlight dazzle and sparkle brightly

When we smile from the heart, from our first breath to our last  
In the Son's light our eyes sparkle and shine indelibly.

## **Faith Says 2020**

### **By Marian M. Fay**

“For every soft caressing breeze that brushes away tears of pain, anger, and frustration.  
There is goodness deeply felt, God is good.

For every outstretched hand that helps care for and comforts the sick and the dying  
There is strength lifting them up and building their trust.  
God can be trusted. He is faithful.

For every gently spoken word of encouragement that dispels feelings of not good  
enough, and I wish I could have done more  
There is an abiding flame of hope, God is hope.

For every actual and virtual hug that shuts out distractions that weigh heavily on your  
shoulders and intensely in your muscles especially in your heart  
There is a loving release of peace, God is love and He gives you His peace.

For every hospital worker, home health aid, grocery employee, trucker, mail carrier,  
delivery person, cook/chef that care for their neighbors and country  
There is an abundance of love and gratefulness from God’s children, God sees you and  
I believe He’s proud and loves you. God is love.

For every celebration of revelation of who we really are in God the One who created us.  
There is true joy in the knowledge you have a place of love to come home to.”

Amen

## **Virtual Togetherness**

*Submitted by Nancie Merritt*

How have you been dealing with this new age of spending so much time at home? I do not consider myself to be very adept at technology, but I have been introduced to Zoom and find that it is a wonderful way to be with people even though it is through your computer or smart phone instead of in person. Unlike Facetime or Skype, participants do not all need to have either Apple or Android systems.

My first introduction to Zoom was to participate in a weekly discussion group that normally meets at the Logan Library. I only needed to download Zoom through zoom.us (free) and when I received the invitation, I merely clicked on the link at the appointed time, and I was in. Although this system can accommodate over 100 participants, I've not been in a group of more than around twenty. You can set up your screen to see all participants in a grid formation. It works best if you have a light or a window in front of you. If you have the light behind you, you will appear in shadow. To find the best spot, put your cell phone on selfie and walk around your house to see where the lighting works best. If you have a laptop or tablet, you can set it up in that location.

Besides this discussion group, I have been to a couple of Happy Hours with friends, Zoomed with my children and grandchildren, Weatherby Book Club, Weatherbee Editors, Weatherby Writers Group and just casual conversations with friends. I think it is better than just a phone call, although I have heard a view that says phone calls are more personal. But, in my opinion, and being a visual person, I feel that seeing someone feels more personal to me.

The Logan Library has two book clubs, Best Sellers and History, that meets through a platform called Google Meets, similar to Zoom, but just a little less intuitive to use. But both are excellent ways to be 'with' people and not feel so isolated in our new Stay-at-Home lifestyle.

I have heard that a winery has held a virtual wine tasting through Zoom as well. It worked like this. The winery advised their customers of four bottles of wine they would feature. Customers bought the wine at a liquor store that sold the vineyard's wine and at the appointed time, they linked into the wine tasting for a discussion about each of the wines they purchased. It sounds like a fun time.

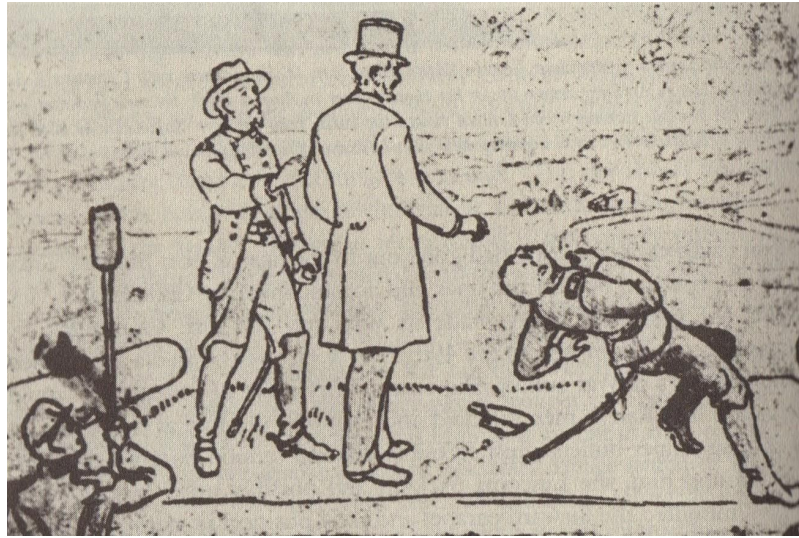
A friend regularly reads bedtime stories to her grandchildren over Zoom and also does arts and crafts with them as well. It seems we are only constrained by our imagination as to ways to stay in touch with friends and relatives.

Hopefully things will gradually get back to what used to be normal. But in the meantime, stay home, stay connected, stay well, stay safe.

**Early's Raid on Washington - The President Under Fire!**  
**Attack on Fort Stevens Repulsed.**  
**By Henry J. Winsor (aka Ben Carlton)**

Rebel General Jubal Early with 15,000 battle-hardened veterans of Lee's army advanced on Washington but were summarily turned back at the gates of the city. Unsubstantiated reports of Rebel numbers and rumors of atrocities were greatly exaggerated, causing many citizens to flee in panic. On July 9th Early's thrust across the Potomac had been heroically delayed by a scratch force of national troops pulled together at the Monocacy River under the command of General Lew Wallace. Consequently, Early and his marauders did not reach the formidable fortifications on the outskirts of Washington City until the eleventh. Once reinforcements from General Grant's army arrived, the game was up, and Early was forced to retreat back to the Valley of Virginia. (But not before maliciously burning to the ground the house of Postmaster General Montgomery Blair at Silver Spring.) This gave rise to the humorous observation that when the rebels arrived to capture Washington City, "Early was *late*!" Not to be outdone, the profane General Early is reported to have exclaimed, "We may not have taken Washington, but we scared Old Abe like h---!"

Far from being "scared," the President, a few senators and members of the Cabinet, notably Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, came out to Fort Stevens to have a first-hand look at the progress of the battle from the ramparts. Heavy skirmishing was occurring beyond the fort's walls as Union infantry advanced to meet the rebel attack. Sharpshooters firing from trees and abandoned houses threatened the President and his entourage as they stood upon the parapet. After a surgeon standing right beside the President was hit and severely wounded, General Wright ordered the Commander-in-Chief down from the works. One officer nearby, perhaps not recognizing the President, was reported to have shouted, "Get down, you fool!" Mr. Lincoln reluctantly complied and sought a safer place to view the battle. It is believed to have been the first and only time an American President has come under hostile enemy fire that didn't emanate from the opposition press. Whether or not rebel marksmen specifically targeted the President may never be known.



President Abraham Lincoln under rebel fire at Fort Stevens, July 12, 1864. (Bas-relief by Schwizer in *Jubal Early's Raid on Washington, 1864* [p. 142])

Mr. Lincoln had been highly displeased upon learning that Gustavus V. Fox, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, had ordered two or three gunboats up the Potomac to stand by with steam up in case the present emergency required that the President be evacuated. However, President Lincoln was not content to ride out the storm confined to the White House. Instead he and Mrs. Lincoln, in the presidential carriage, rode out the Seventh Street Road to Fort Stevens to watch the battle in progress on two successive days, July 11th and 12th.





Members of the 6th Independent Battery, New York Artillery at Fort Stevens [i.e., Parker Press Park, Woodbridge, NJ] prepare to fire as President Lincoln and an unidentified lady look on. Photo courtesy of William Myers.

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Ultimately, Fort Stevens with its heavy artillery and the other forts that form a protective ring around the Capital proved their worth, even undermanned as they were, as the works were just too strong for a raiding party the size of Early's force to invest and overrun. The ordnance at Fort Stevens alone boasted four 24-pounder seacoast cannon firing in barbette; six 24-pounder siege guns in an embrasure; two 8-inch siege howitzers; five 30-pounder Parrott guns, plus a 10-inch siege and a 24-pounder Coehorn mortar. The Confederates' plan to siphon off troops

and relieve Lee's army besieged at Petersburg, succeeded to some degree, but not enough to materially alter the strategic situation there. We daily await the news that General Grant's troops will have breached the works at Petersburg, the so-called "Backdoor to Richmond," and sent the rebels flying.

- H. J. W.

[Editor's note: For more information, see B. F. Cooling's *Jubal Early's Raid on Washington, 1864*]

*In Less Than a Minute*  
By Teresa Carlton

It takes less than a minute  
For a bomb to destroy

A car to spin off the road  
From black ice

For a word said  
That divides

For a prognosis to change  
To death

Less than a minute  
For a life to change.

## *Mamma's Dance*

By Teresa Carlton

Little girl tapping  
Falling asleep out on the porch  
In the dark  
...abusive dad

Little girl twirling away from mommy's arms  
...a mom you never believed loved you  
Step - hop, step - hop - to the left then right  
You didn't marry your sweetheart,  
But sashayed to the door that looked safer  
– Respectable life.

You twirled and danced to your reflection.  
Suddenly little ones looked back at you.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5  
Each with needs and problems.

In and out you waltzed  
Here and there  
1 - 2 - 3 men  
Donny, Sid, Joe

Turn, turn, turn  
There you are - own business, recipe creations, even modeling hats.

Twist, sway - suddenly gray  
Days and steps much slower.

Tap shoes packed away  
Ballet ones all worn  
The music fades and the curtain closes  
Your curtsey was your last.

## Corona Virus 2020

9 days ago the governor of first state of Delaware declared a state of emergency and joined the rest of the nation ordered to practice self quarantining. Only places of business that were essential were allowed to be open. Grocery stores, doctor's offices, hospitals, gas stations , social service agencies, and police departments stayed open. Even the schools were closed and teachers had to hold classes remotely over the internet. All restaurants were closed except for take out or delivery. Bars, movie theaters and park facilities and children's playground equipment were closed because people needed to practice safe distancing i.e. 6 ft. apart. T.V. shows are reruns or, actors and hosts are doing shows remotely from there homes.

### How I'm Spending Corona Virus Stay At Home Time

By Marian M. Fay

By and large I'm keeping up with friends and family by Facebook and phone/texting.

If I'm watching TV I try to keep news to a minimum . I keep or son in prayer since we don't have any communication with him at this time. When I do watch TV I look for home improvement

shows or reruns of Gilmore girls and Big Bang Theory. Last night I watched the PBS show American Experience, the polio epidemic as told by survivors. Most of my life I have distanced myself from this subject because it would be admitting I'm not as normal as everyone else. Since

I've only in the last year or so started to think about and write about my own experience with polio

I watched the show. Outside of a few inaccuracies in their time line and getting mildly pissed off at

the reckless way the vaccines were contaminated and distributed, I found the show to be a humbling

experience. When I was 4 years old I was unaware of the enormity of the crisis. I just wanted to get better, go home and resume a "normal" life. Last night as I saw the row upon row of iron lungs and listened to the stories of the survivors and their family members I got a better understanding of what my family went through. Just like this present Corona pandemic, so ,many people died year after year. It gave a whole new meaning and spiritual weight to the phrase "I'm still here". A mostly paralyzed arm is a small cross to bare when I look at other

survivors who learned to live with their “new normal”. So if your new normal right now is inconvenience and cabin fever, it's a small price to pay for staying alive. Stay home, stay in touch through letters or digital devices, stay safe and pray. Be counted among the lucky ones who can say "I'm still here."

*What Darkness Hides*

By Shelby Carlton

**In the dead of night  
Left alone with my thoughts  
Staring at the ceiling  
It's you on my mind**

**In the darkness waiting  
Monsters all around  
Sleep continues to elude me  
You're still on my mind**

**In the absence of light  
Shadows are closing in  
My troubled thoughts keep me awake  
You're all I think of**

**In the darkness where monsters hide  
Pondering your secrets and lies  
I toss and turn and sigh  
It's still you on my mind**

**In the darkest of rooms  
Surrounded by nothingness  
I close my eyes but sleep does not come  
I still think of you**

**In the dead of night when demons come out to play  
Monsters are creeping closer  
Their whispers carry your voice to me  
You alone remain on my mind**

**In the edges of the room  
Shadows lurk nearer  
Watching in silence as I am suffocated by the emptiness  
I think only of you**

**In the cover of darkness  
Secrets are kept hidden  
Guarded by demons of the night  
I am still haunted by yours**



# ***What Once was Mine***

By Shelby Carlton

*Blue lights coming at me in the dark -  
What once was mine passing me by,  
Never to be mine again.  
Somewhere along the way I lost what I loved -  
All that mattered to me,  
Lost in the blink of an eye -  
While headlights chase me in the darkness.  
When I dream of dying  
I never feel so alive -  
But your face brings me back to reality,  
And every morning I wake up only to remember that you're gone.  
All that I once loved,  
Ripped away from me in the dead of night -  
Strangers stealing what used to be mine.  
Blue lights continue to follow me,  
Headlights running me down -  
A constant reminder of all that was lost.  
Dreams of death disturb my sleep,  
As I barely remain among the living -  
But your voice brings me back to the real world,  
Reminding me once again of all that was taken from me.  
The stranger I once loved too much is no longer mine,*

*And I have nothing left to hold on to.  
The blue lights are fading away,  
Headlights rushing in the darkness -  
Leaving me behind as I lay in the street.  
I wonder if this is another dream of death,  
Or if I'm waking up at last*

## The Last Great White

by

Sabrina Hall

The salty air pushes its way past the hull and brings a soft breeze over the main deck. The air is too thin, but it's been that way for— *what?*— a decade or so now. Between fish steadily eating up all the CO<sub>2</sub>-consuming bacteria and plankton, and the Amazon Desert too depleted for vegetation since 2048, thin air has been commonplace anywhere O<sub>2</sub> factories aren't pumping.

*No factories in the ocean, as far as I can tell.*

Dusty likes being at sea more than on land for that reason. Not that he doesn't love his family— he loves them more than anything—but there's just something about looking out in any direction and not seeing smog-ridden skylines and ever-churning factories. The sea holds an unrelenting white noise and a quiet resolve that will outlive them all. Or at least, outlive him, his daughter, and his granddaughter. He would have to learn to be okay with that.

A low wave crests at the stern, and a cool mist sprays Dusty's weather-worn face. At sixty-and-change, he isn't the young marine biologist he'd been in the early 2020's. He'd spent his twenties on boats more than on land, and his fiancée barely managed to strip him of his sea legs after their wedding. His house might have been in sunny Hawaii, and Koror after that, but his home is out here.

He shuts his bottle-green eyes against the scorching sun. A bead of sweat starts at his temple and snakes its way to his chin. The steady bob and dip of the aged tugboat grounds him to the task at hand: *Bessie*.

Dusty had his first encounter with Bessie when he was twenty-five. She was twenty, intimidating, and by far the most beautiful thing he'd ever laid eyes on. He was fresh out of university— beginner's eagerness coupling with the illusion of grandeur that came with youth made him invincible. Or at least, he thought it did.

His research team was comprised of young, sun-burnt biologists, boating crew, and Captain Howards. He'd seemed like a miserable, ancient bastard at the time, but Dusty was

quickly approaching Cap's age. He wouldn't be surprised if his own leathery, I've-seen-it-all face was a mirror image of Cap's.

They'd set sail off the coast of O'ahu with three spearguns, a bucket of GPS tags, and an unquenchable excitement for a world teaming just below the cerulean blue. Dusty, Carter, and Jean suited up in scuba-suits. Carter and Jean were regulars, but Dusty could barely check his gauges past trembling fingers. Cap thought someone more experienced should take on the task—and by Dusty's own drumming heart, he couldn't help agreeing— but by some stroke of fate, or the other guys not wanting to smell like chum for a week, Dusty was up to bat.

He lowered himself into the rusty diving cage, letting the water accept him into a domain so unlike his own. The water was crystal clear and tinted in a blue like stained glass. Phytoplankton drifted past like tufts of snow. Red crept into the water like rose petals, the coagulated blood and fish-heads a beacon for the creatures they'd come to find.

At first, a school of silver fish swarmed like termites on fresh wood, feeding and dodging away. Then, as if on cue, they disappeared into the dark blue below. Dusty's heart hit like a bass drum, slamming into his ribs enough to hurt, but he breathed slow and steady. He'd been told many times over— despite popular belief—that the sound of our beating hearts scares them more than they scare us. But Dusty *was* scared. He couldn't help it.

From the end of his sight, Dusty saw a small figure drifting forward, body swaying back and forth in a rhythmic dance. The current pulled his cage to and fro, rocking him like a rag-doll, but what approached him had strength that cut through steel.

*It was her.*

She approached, focus locked in on the chum. Her dorsal surface was mottled with patches of dark and light gray that contrasted sharply against the sleek white of her underbelly. She swam past Dusty with confidence that comes from power, and he couldn't help but stare.

Dusty was a hair under six feet, but he could tell just by watching that she was at least three times his height. She snapped at the fish heads, drawing them in and circling the boat. She kept close, nearly hugging the hull, and Dusty's entire vision was consumed by her. He reached gloved fingers through the bars. They ran down the side of her thick skin.

She felt it. She circled back. Her big, black eye was staring at his, mouth perched open to taste the water around him. He kept his heart as still as he could, not wanting to scare her. His heart wasn't screaming with fear anymore; it screamed with excitement. With fascination. With awe.

She swept by close, her pectoral fin longer than his arm, and his fingers slid over it with wonder. He knew he had a job to do, but he could have stayed in that moment the rest of his lifetime. The rest of *every* lifetime. Raising his speargun, he aimed for her dorsal fin and pulled the trigger. The tag stuck on the first try, and as quickly as she'd entered his life, she left. Down and down into the darkness until her long, elegant tail camouflaged with the depths below.

When they pulled him from the cage, the crew barely had the gear off him before he was running to the monitors in his boxers. Lou was at the computer, grinning from ear to ear.

"You got it," he said. "Now, you name it."

Dusty had named her Bessie. He couldn't be sure why, but it just felt right. He'd kept tabs on Bessie ever since, watching her geolocation circulate between the coast of O'ahu and the islands of Palau for nearly forty-five years. Sometimes, on research expeditions, he'd see her again.

Every time, she was a little different. A few more hooks stuck in the skin of her mouth and gills. More raw or scarred flesh where fishing line had sliced into her before she could break away. Once, he'd seen her with her shoal and two pups keeping near. He'd tagged them too, but as time would tell and finning continued, Bessie outlived both of her young. Bessie outlived her entire shoal too, and the one after that.

In fact, Bessie outlived every other one of her kind. As each GPS tag surfaced the devastating truth, Bessie's tag continued its migration through the Pacific. She is the last Great White shark, and likely the last shark left in any of the seven seas. By 2053, Bulls and Tigers were gone, and the Lemons and Sands weren't far behind. As shy and elusive as Hammerheads were, finners had plowed through that population last year. Sure, there might be a goblin or whale shark somewhere in the depths, and a shark or two smart enough to keep away, but those were hopeful wishes. The facts are that of the 243,000 sharks tagged since 1962, only one tag still pings. It'd been pinging back and forth in the same lazy oval for forty-two years— until

today. Today, Bessie traveled outside of Palau's sanctuary space and crossed into dangerous waters.

Dusty walks across the deck to Carter. Despite the years, she still has that stubborn youth that makes her eyes gleam. She sits, hunched over a glare-ridden computer screen at the port of the boat, eyes glued to the green radar scanning over and over. *Just like Lou used to.*

"We're ten clicks away," she says without looking up.

He nods. Why Bessie would change her course after all these years, he doesn't know. Perhaps she'd found another Great White. Maybe a new shoal with a new migration pattern.

"I told you I'd let you know when we're within three."

"In all the years you've known me, when have I managed to be patient?" Dusty cracks, and Carter rolls her eyes.

"Why don't you go bug Jean in the wheelhouse? Or better, that new kid you brought along."

*Ah, yes, the new kid.* At twenty-five himself, he'd never seen a shark outside aquariums. A good alternative to being hunted in the wild, but no substitute for the wide open sea.

The last of the aquarium sharks had died off a few years ago— gene pool too small, offspring too few and far between— but Dusty could never bring himself to go back there. He'd taken his granddaughter to see the sharks when she was three, and he couldn't shake the guilt that ate away at him like starved piranhas. *Innocent creatures imprisoned for a crime they're not committing.*

They were confined to twenty feet of stale water while the real killers had the entire ocean to themselves.

Dusty shuffles to the bow, decidedly not in the mood to talk to Jean or the new kid. His stomach writhes like live worms on hooks, waiting for him to bite at one before dragging their sharp tip through his gut. At the edge of his sight, something squats on the water. He squints, willing the low-brimmed fog of ocean mist to clear. It looks almost like the outline of a small boat— about the size of their tug— and Dusty's jaw tightens.

*If it's a boat, it doesn't have a radio*, otherwise Carter would have picked up on it. Dusty's been around long enough to know a boat this far out and that far off the grid is seldom a good thing.

*Longline fishers?* Though the method had been outlawed in most places years ago, it didn't stop truly determined fishers from poaching fish, endangered turtles, and sharks. The encroaching death of longline fishing was aided by the fact that science had gotten better—scarier by Dusty's own opinion—allowing biotech companies to produce most meat products in labs instead of farming or fishing. One of the lucrative businesses to crop up was lab-generated shark fins; however, that hadn't deterred shark finners. As far as the businessmen were concerned, pseudo-fins were a steady income, but the right man would pay handsomely for an authentic fin, especially as the natural supply dwindled into nonexistence. Dusty could only imagine how much the last authentic shark fin would go for—tens of thousands, if not more.

“Three clicks!” Carter shouts.

Dusty has witnessed enough shark finnings to last him an eternity. By his forties, he changed gears from marine biologist to marine conservationist. This boat was only one of a small fleet that used to travel the seas in search of shark finners. They'd do what they could to stop it, but between the legality of overtaking a ship and the plethora of fishers, victory was seldom tasted.

In his nightmares, he still sees the way finners cut the fins off living sharks—some less than a year old—before dumping their bleeding, breathing bodies back into the water. They never cared that whatever sharks didn't bleed out on the descent would either drown or starve on the ocean floor, but Dusty could never stop caring. Never stop remembering.

The boat was coming into view now. Hull covered in barnacles, and wheelhouse open to the elements. A small crew scrambles around the deck, fishing lines haphazardly rolled around a rusted winch. A tarp squats near the bow, but he doesn't see any fish. His teeth grind.

“New kid!” Dusty bellows. “Get the harpoon!”

“Harpoon?” Carter calls, and the sharp crack of her laptop snapping shut echoes to the bow.

New kid— *God, what's his name, James?*— James hands Dusty the harpoon, and Dusty attaches the rope from the H-bitt to it. Carter runs to him, but he doesn't look at her. He takes aim, just like he's done a hundred times, and shoots.

The harpoon strikes the barnacle-ridden hull, rocking the small boat. The crew flail, struggling to keep balance. Then, realizing what's happened, they race to cut the line.

"Pull it in."

James obeys Dusty's order, starting the capstan. As hard as the crew tries, they won't be able to cut the rope in time.

"Dusty, what the hell?" Carter demands, but her voice is shaking. She knows what he's thinking, and it chills her past the heat of the summer sun.

Dusty grabs the shotgun from its cradle on the starboard wall as the fishing boat bumps against the tire fender of the tug. Carter follows suit, her own gun in hand, and they hop onto the opposing boat.

The fishermen raise their hands over their heads, shouting in a different language to each other. One draws a handgun, but Carter is quicker. Her barrel is on him, and she pumps the shotgun.

"Drop it."

Whether he understands her words or not, he knows enough to put his weapon on the deck.

Another crew member looks Dusty in the eye, pleading with him. His eyes dart to the tarp quickly, and he shifts his body as if to hide it from Dusty's view. Dusty takes a step toward it, steeling his gut, and the man cries out again. He places his body between Dusty and the tarp.

"Move," Dusty barks.

The man screams at him, but Dusty doesn't understand. Using the butt of his shotgun, Dusty cracks him in the ribs, and the man falls to the ground with a pained gasp.

The tarp is low to the deck, wrinkled and misted with the ocean's salty spray. Watery, pink liquid pools around its edges and leaks through a limber hole. Lowering his gun, Dusty tugs back the tarp.



A pile of mottled gray fins. Two pectoral fins a little longer than his arms. A long, elegant tail. One towering dorsal fin with a GPS tag through the top.

Dusty's bottom lip quivers, eyes stinging as he takes a stiff step back. His teeth grind, and he runs a hand through his wiry, white hair. He looks away, pain in his eyes, but like the draw of a car wreck, his gaze is forced back. The blood at the jaggedly cut ends of the fins drip, drip, drips.

Dusty's throat burns, hot coals starting there and plopping into his stomach. The fishing crew still yells to him, but their voices are nothing more than the white noise of the ocean.

He has no focus for them, only *her*.

*She was the last Great White.*

# Just Write

Meetings held one Saturday a month

10:00 a.m. at the

Gloucester County Library System

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