

Happy belated birthday Stephen, please accept this story as a small token of our appreciation for the great many years of entertainment, and enrichment that your work has brought into our lives.

There is so much more that could be said, however, knowing that you are not comfortable with *too* much applause, we'll stop here. (We have no desire to embarrass you!)

Wishing you the very best always,

From,

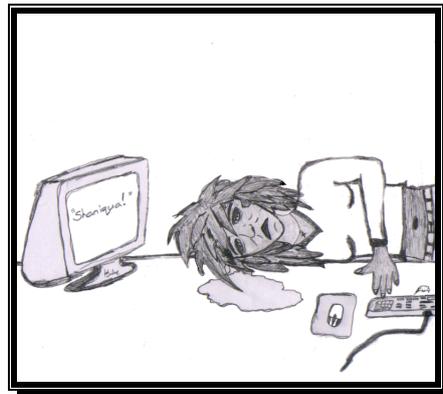
All of us here at the message board. (StephenKing.com.)

'The Message Bored'

This story is dedicated to two people.

1: For Stephen, without you there is no Message Board.

2: For Ms Mod, (our Dinh) without you, there could not have been a 'Message Bored.'



The young woman lay dying alongside her computer, and could not believe that it had come to this.

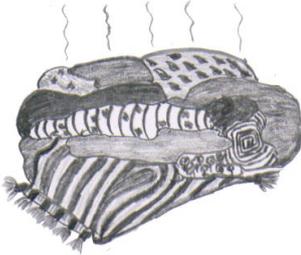
She lifted a trembling brown hand to touch her temple, wincing, she passed it in front of green eyes that were fast becoming dim.

The sight of her life's blood evoked another image - something beautiful, (*a bloom?*) alive, vibrant and yet fragile.

I was looking for this... or something like it. She thinks as her mind begins to unravel. Her last coherent thoughts (*oddly*) are of a Message Board, dedicated to one admired by many.

A place where she has spent a great deal of time...

(FlakeNoir)



But, in her fog, she realized it wasn't God's bloom she was seeing in her mind's eye. It was her old friend, Jeeves, whose face flickered along her oxygen-starved synapses.

He was the one, with his Vin Diesel good looks, who led her to the Web site in the beginning when out of curiosity; she asked him if there was an official place.

Her first visits were just to read the posts--some admiring, others angry and ugly. But, between her Mahjong obsession and her shaky Google experiences, she decided to reach out and speak to the many voices.

From that point, her life was lost in a series of piles: mounds of smelly towels and skid-marked underwear; pyramids of clean, wrinkled-set clothes; towering dishes with charming black-fuzz/sour-chunk motifs; and forgotten mail, stockpiled on the Salvation Army dinette set.



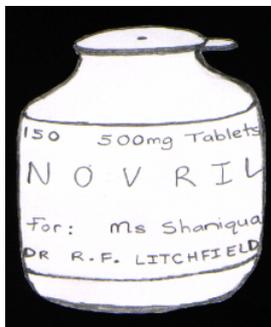
And now? Well, now she was in a heap of trouble.

(Dana Jean)

She blinked and looked at the screen, seeing a name that looked familiar to her. She'd seen it before, but in the clouds of her mind, she couldn't remember whose it was. She squinted her eyes and focused her vision to read a message that appeared to be urgent. "Shaniqua! Are you all right? What did you mean when you said you think you're dying?"

She then realized that the message was directed at her. It was from a concerned friend she had met on the Board.

"Help me," she muttered at the monitor. Her pain had escalated to new heights and she couldn't bear it.



She stumbled her hands about her desk, searching for her Novril. She grasped the bottle and dumped a handful of pills into her mouth. She swallowed them dry. She gagged as they bumped down her throat.

(Jo Noonan)

Her mind began to clear, even as the pain crescendoed and flowed over her again.

"Think!" she hissed at herself. How to explain the loss of all that she had taken for granted, of all that she held dear? He was a friend, yes (*and maybe more?*), but could he be trusted with the truth?

More urgently, how much water did she have left? Dry-swallowing any more Novril would surely bring the bleeding again.

(Kim L)

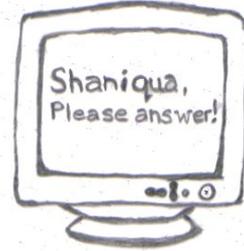
She had to do something, but what? She was confused. She tried to rise but suddenly the pain overcame her in a wave that let rolling tears over her cheeks.

She clenched her teeth and pressed herself slowly against her desk, which started to wobble.

She could see that the message was still on the screen, but now there was also the desperate request "Shaniqua, please answer!"

Her head was buzzing and she trembled like a puppy after its birth.

(Melanie)



No answer came to her mind.

It was blank as the back pages of her unfinished novels. Her ears pulsed with blood bleeding from a throbbing headache. Only fog could curdle in her mind. Like being lost again.

Shaniqua please answer?? How could she? With this pain beating through her body and her head like that of a drunk. Her hands were almost too weak to clutch the computer mouse. Let alone type.

The fog of her mind was slowly turning black. Black as Death himself.

Shaniqua please answer.

With what little life left in her now frail body. No chance of answer. No chance. The black fog ruled her now.

(Milly the MB Jake)



...Black. The color of everything that has nearly squashed the pitiful existence of her dwindling life. Black Clouds that produce acid rain in poverty stricken metropolises of the worlds.

Black Houses that contain Black Memories and other unspeakable Black Things that no one should ever have

to see. Black Panties, the only underwear without skid marks in the house, encompassing the Black Carpeted life-centre that controls all men.

Black Lungs of a twenty-two year pack a day cigarette smoker who at the age of 40 (*odd?*) finally freaking quit!

Black Flag to the owner of the engine that is smoking the death smoke of high octane and poor maintenance, blocking my way to the PATH.

Black Screen staring back at me every time I dare to open my eyes.

Black! A scream of hatred and condescension from others, even those with same color skin? Does Shaniqua know Black? She shorly do...

(Mark Marino)

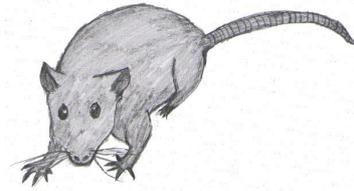
She tried to type...but what? A request for help? She wasn't even sure what had happened to her.

She looked at the screen and froze. Just four words but frightening in their urgency. "Watch out! They're coming!" From the window Shaniqua heard scratching and then slowly the window opened. Rats poured into the room.

They skittered over her feet and one ran up her arm that had been hanging limply on the floor. It sat on her chest and looked innocently into her eyes.

What was the smell that came with it? Rotten corpses?

"Shoo!" Shaniqua whispered. "Leave me alone." The rat sat up on its haunches. She could feel its whiskers as it sniffed her face. He's not going to hurt you, she thought, just a little ole rat. Suddenly it screeched and lunged for her. Then the black was gone and Shaniqua saw only the red of pain.



(Fenryk)

She opened her eyes to find herself sprawled on the keyboard sweating, not bleeding. The images of attacking rats faded from her tortured grasp of reality.

She needs to answer the question. IS she all right?

Trying to work through the pain, she must get a message out. She must warn the message board about the virus that is now trying to take her life.

Her brain is starting to boil; the malignant invader took hold in her synapses. As her head lay on the keyboard, her right hand twitching every so often from lack of water, it refreshes the message board.

In her dehydrated delusional state she thinks is this real, can this be happening? "Did I get this sickness from this message board or am I losing my mind?" she gasps.

Shaniqua growing weaker by the second lifts her throbbing head and she begins to type...

(Born In Sin)

"Logggg ooffff!" She tries to warn her friend on the message board. She wants to type "Get off of the damn board now while you still have a chance," - but she can't. She's too weak physically.

She feels the unwanted. It has come for her. That dark invader we must all meet one day. Slowly it begins to slither over her feet and around her ankles. The cold hand of death has touched her. Her mind swirls back to how this all

began. Like a lightning bolt, and as clear as day, it hits her. It was him...Jeeves. He knew what he was doing all along. He was very good looking, yes, but she knew the evil was there....

lurking. She had seen it once, but only for a brief moment. It was in his eyes, the day he had introduced her to the message board of her favorite writer. She knew but chose not to see the truth.

She became his victim. She wasn't the first nor the only one. There were others. Some may have already met their fate, while some were like her, holding on by a thread.

How could you have let this happen Shaniqua? She screams in her mind. "Just find a way out!" A voice whispers.

(Ida)



She tried to peer through the darkness, praying for just a glimmer of light.
 "Is anyone there? Cola? Ms. Mod? Anyone? Somebody, please help me"!!
 She froze! Was that whispering she heard?
 Straining to hear any sound, she listened again.
 "Shaniqua... is that you?" She sobbed with relief at hearing that familiar voice.
 (Angie)

"Where's the writer?" he spoke again, and, through all of her shock, she realized whose voice she was hearing.

It filled her with cold terror, and her arms broke out in gooseflesh.

"It looks like you got a wee busted up there little lady," Jeeves laughed.



The darkness was still complete, but she could imagine his eyes so insane and distant. She heard a strange sound, something like circus music in the distance.

"I don't want this!" Shaniqua screamed. "HA!" Jeeves yelled, actually speaking his laughter, "you think you know the Black?" She pulled herself up onto wobbly feet and tried to find the sound of his voice.

"You think you know darkness? You don't know anything lady-bitch!" ... "Leave me alone, I don't know what you're talking about!"

Jeeves was behind her in that instant, smelling her hair. She trembled. "The writer," he said, laughing, "In here, all of his stories are true."

(Steven Puroll)

"You lie!" She screamed. All she could think was how Elli had tried to warn her. She had said that his aura was as black as midnight. But Shaniqua had still gone to bed with Jeeves.

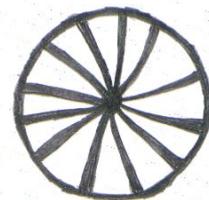
The sex wasn't even good, and then he pulls this shit?

She started to gain strength from her anger. In her head she could hear the voices of her friends, *Shaniqua, are you all right?* She had to answer. By hook or by crook, she had to answer.

"What do you think you're doing bitch? Did I see hope in your eyes?" He laughed; "no one ever gets out alive."

Shaniqua smiled, now she was pissed the fuck off. "You ever hear of Ka?" she asks. "Well, it's like a wheel. And if you don't leave me alone little cock boy, I'm going to roll it RIGHT UP YOUR ASSSSSS!!!!"

(Ellen Allison)



Conclusion:

Rage turns to wild panic, as Shaniqua realises she's on the brink of losing her mind.

All I wanted was to meet other people with the same interests, now look at me!

Desperation grips her and she calls - "Ka-tet! I need you!"

"Don't look for help here Shaniqua, you won't find any!" Laughs Jeeves. "And as for Ka..."

But Shaniqua is not listening; confusion rules her as she casts about, attempting to find a way out.

"We're here Shaniqua." comes a voice from the dark.

Jeeves' head whips round trying to locate the source of these words.

"It's me, Ani, we're all here Shan'."

"Where *is* here? I don't get it, I don't understand this place!" Fear is added to her confusion.

Jeeves slaps his knee and laughs.

"It's the Ether! Cyberspace, *the Black!* - It's what there is between Sent messages and Inbox." He's really enjoying himself now.

"This is the place where your message goes when you receive a failed delivery notice. Welcome to eternity Shaniqua! Come on in and make yourself at home - you may *be* here awhile!"

Her eyes are now drawn to shapes - some familiar (*from midworld?*), others not - separating themselves from the shadows.

Sensing an opening, Shaniqua tries to distract Jeeves.

"How did we all get here?" she asks, not liking having to engage him.

"Riiight Shaniqua, this is not some cheesy who-dunnit; whereby I now *conveniently* give you all the answers."

This is all the distraction that is needed.

A tall, lean figure steps forward from the shadows. He raises a large revolver with worn sandalwood grips and sights down the barrel.

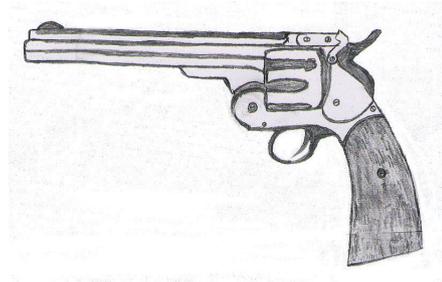
With a loud *crack!* The top of Jeeves' head is atomised.

The tall figure bends to Shaniqua and places a warm (*whole*) hand upon her shoulder. Smiling down into her (*soul*) green eyes, he asks,

"Shaniqua?" She nods.

"We are well met here on this message board."

"Aye," Says Shaniqua "*very* well met indeed!"



End.

26th September 2005
North, South, East and West,
AllWorld(s).

The following are names of those that showed an interest, but unfortunately were unable to contribute to the story for various reasons:

Jodi, Mike B, Leah Spradin, Elli, Brian, Greg AKA Ka Babe # 1, Cindy S, Darxka, Rick Murgittroyd, Kayla, Sharon C, T2, Joanne Tolson, and Cola.