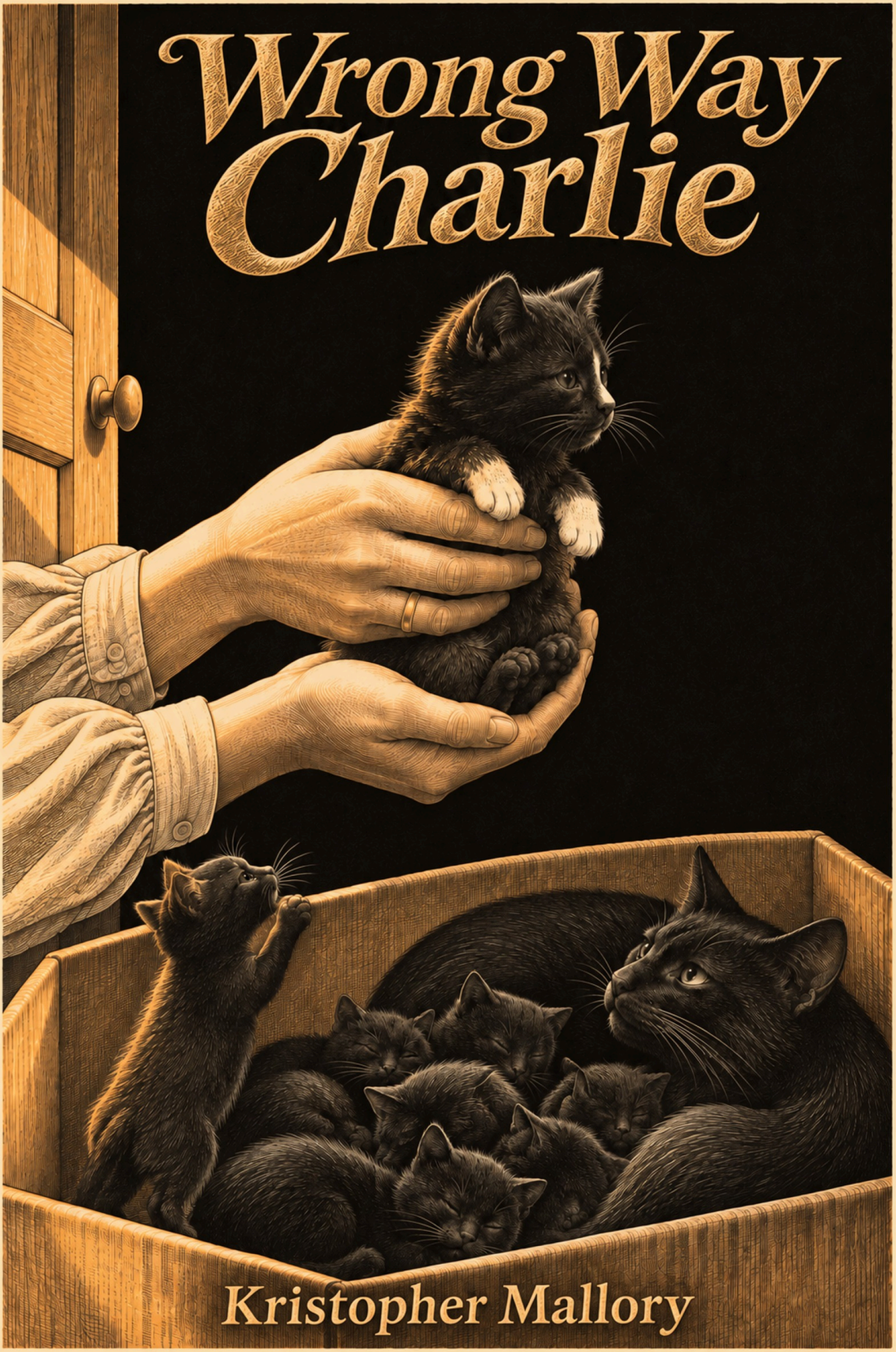
Wrong Way Charlie



Kristopher Mallory

Wrong Way Charlie

by

Kristopher Mallory

Wrong Way Charlie

A Sammy Fowler Story

Copyright



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Wrong Way Charlie

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The Price To See The Dead

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A Gift Of Bone

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The Diary

Ruined Sheets

The Scarecrow Corpse

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Special Thanks

For Charlie.

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Wrong Way Charlie

“I’m crushing your head!”

~ The Head Crusher, The Kids in the Hall

Do you remember your very first best friend? I do.

++++

Midnight was giving birth in the closet at the end of the hall. The repeating pattern of deep growls and shrieks woke me.

Kittens! I nearly shouted as I crawled down from the top bunk. My sister stirred on the bottom bed. I paused on the ladder, held my breath, and hoped she wouldn't open her eyes. After a moment, she rolled onto her side and fell back into a deep sleep. I was glad she didn't wake; I wanted the kitties all to myself.

Midnight continued to scream.

I cracked open my bedroom door and saw my parents kneeling in the hallway, peering into the closet. They noticed I was standing there and told me to get back in bed. "But I want to make sure Midnight is okay," I protested. She was mine, too. I should've been allowed to check on her.

Dad refused to let me come out of the room. He said he would get me when it was over. Mom agreed with him. She said I was too little to watch.

Too little? I was four years old and knew that babies came from a mommy's belly. Plus, I had been waiting *forever* to see the kittens. My parents weren't being fair!

"Please let me?" I begged. "I'll be good."

Mom commanded me to go back to bed. I crossed my arms and shook my head. Dad threatened to spank me. I stomped my foot and cried, thinking a tantrum would make them understand that I was right, and they were wrong. Dad didn't care much for my new approach; he picked me up by the arm and carried me to my bed. He said to keep quiet or else he would take the nightlight and lock me in the dark.

"It's not fair!" I screamed, instantly regretting it.

Dad squeezed my arm so tight that I began to cry for real. When he let go, I rubbed the spot, trying to make it look worse than it really was. He told me I was punished, then pulled the nightlight from the wall.

"No, don't!" I cried out.

Ignoring my pleas, Dad went back into the hall and slammed my door shut.

I heard my sister sobbing from the lower bed. I felt bad that she had to suffer for my mistake, so I climbed down and cuddled up next to her. I told her I was sorry. She was terrified of the dark, more so than I, but eventually she relaxed and fell back to sleep while holding my hand. I couldn't rest, though. Midnight's persistent shuddering cries and gargling noises kept me from closing my eyes. I stared into the black, waiting.

It felt like forever.

I'm not sure how it happened, but the next thing I remember is Mom waking my sister and me. "Come see," she urged. The sunlight coming through the window lit up her smile.

The kittens were tiny versions of Midnight. Eight of them in total. All the same jet-black color — except for one; he had a speck of white fur above his nose, with white front paws to match. That one… that one was mine. I knew the moment I saw him.

Dad said we could give them names. It wasn't an easy task since they all looked the same. After several failed attempts to remember which was which, my sister decided the best thing to do was to call them Kitty-Cat, but she was only two years old and pronounced it *Key-ca*. The oddball was the only exception; he was mine to name, so I named him Charlie.

Charlie was more playful than the rest of the litter. Whenever my sister and I were allowed to pick them up, he would roll on his back to let us pet his belly. Sometimes he would try to suck on our fingers, mistaking them for a part of his mother. It never failed to make my sister laugh. And sometimes, when Midnight lay down in the box to feed them, he would get turned around, managing to walk away from her. Mom would pick him up, turn him in the right direction, and say, "You're going the wrong way, Charlie!"

Eventually, the kittens opened their eyes. My sister and I were allowed to play with them without supervision, but only if we stayed in the hallway. Dad said we weren't allowed to take them out of the closet

because they were still too small to run free. We didn't mind. Sitting on the floor petting them was one of our favorite things to do, especially when Midnight fed them.

Charlie was turning out to be the runt. He ate well, but he never latched on to Midnight like the others did. While they loved to pad at her stomach and purr, Charlie was always too busy going the wrong way. No matter how many times we picked him up and faced him in the right direction, sooner or later he would get turned around again.

Time went on, and the kittens got bigger. They meowed whenever someone would walk down the hall, demanding us to stop and play. Sometimes they got up on their hind legs, just barely able to peek over the edge of the box.

One day, my sister yelled something about the kittens. Mom and I came running from the living room to see what all the fuss was about. Charlie was in the hall, on the outside of the box, trying to correct his mistake. He clawed at the cardboard, wanting to make his way back to the other side. He kept falling over, shaking himself, then trying again. It was funny.

Feeling sorry for him, Mom picked him up, gave him a kiss, and sat him next to his brothers and sisters. "You went the wrong way, Charlie," she said.

That was the first time Charlie broke out of jail, but not the last. He would make it over the edge, and either Midnight or Mom would grab him by the scruff of the neck, then toss him back into the box. It happened again and again. The whole family had to help keep him where he belonged. After a while, everyone got tired of dealing with his shenanigans. We officially changed his name to Wrong Way Charlie and let him have free rein of the hallway.

Even Midnight stopped caring. All the other kittens were content to stay in the box, but Charlie came and went as he pleased. He never went far, though. Sometimes he would sneak a peek into my bedroom, or into the bathroom, but that was the extent of his exploration. It was easy to

forget that he was only a few weeks old, and too frightened to venture into any of the rooms. The box and hallway were the only world that he knew… the only place he felt safe.

A few days later, I woke to the sound of Grandma's voice coming from the living room. She was talking to my sister about making her a new dress. *No one told me Grandma was coming over!* I thought. Excited to see her, to see if she brought me a present, I jumped out of bed and ran down the hallway.

I felt this… soft crunch… under my foot. *What was that?* I turned around to see what I had stepped on.

Then I screamed.

Wrong Way Charlie crawled toward me; the back half of him was crushed and twisted. Horrible sounds escaped from his small mouth: *Meeeaaahhh. Meeeaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhh.*

I continued to scream.

Charlie was still trying to crawl toward me while making that resounding, awful sputter. His body trembled, and his little head twitched incessantly. Mom came running down the hall, my sister right behind her. Blood was everywhere, a trail of gore soaking into the carpet. All I heard was screaming — screaming, screaming, screaming; it echoed down the hallway, and throughout the years.

Midnight leaped out of the closet and ran toward me. Wide-eyed, she hissed and swatted, then lapped at the blood flowing from Charlie's gaping mouth. Grandma grabbed hold of me, held me close. My sister pressed her face into Grandma's side so she wouldn't have to see.

Mom and Charlie were still screaming, still making those appalling noises. I couldn't tell them apart. "It's still alive!" Mom wailed. "It's still alive! Oh my God, what do I do?"

Though Grandma tried to protect me, I couldn't look away. Charlie was crying in agony. The look on his little face said: *Why is this happening to me? What have I done? Make it stop. Please. Please, make it stop.*

“You have to *kill it*!” Grandma shouted. “For Christ’s sake, put the thing out of its misery!”

Mom ran into the living room and turned the corner. I heard a drawer in the kitchen pulled open, then slammed shut. She came running back, hammer in hand.

“EEEEEEEEEHH!” Mom shrieked. She pounded the hammer down on Charlie’s head, over and over and over again while Midnight attacked her, trying to protect the kitten.

And yet Charlie still crawled toward me, gurgling: *Meeeaaahhh. Meeeaaahhhggg.*

Midnight kept scratching and hissing. Mom kicked her away and brought the hammer down again. After the fifth or sixth drop, Charlie finally stopped making the awful noises. Chunks of his skull and brain littered the hallway.

It was hours later before I calmed down enough to understand what had happened. Mom told me that it was okay. Dad said it wasn’t my fault. They said these things as they cleaned up the mess that used to be Charlie.

But it wasn’t okay, and it was my fault. My kitten got hurt because of me. If I hadn’t been running, my Charlie would be alive — *I* killed him.

++++

Charlie was my *first* best friend, my *first* responsibility, and my *first* introduction to death. He’ll always be with me. Even now, after all these years… every time I walk down a fucking hallway, I see Wrong Way Charlie’s mangled little body crawling toward me.

— Sammy Fowler

THE END.



About the Author



Born near Baltimore, Maryland, Kris has been writing short fiction since he was a kid. First sharing his ramblings on Stealth Fiction and then on Reddit, where most of his stories were posted to r/nosleep. His stories have been featured on The NoSleep Podcast, Chilling Tales for Dark Nights, Tales to Terrify, and Horror on the Rocks. The recording of The Scarecrow Corpse, read by Markiplier, has been heard hundreds of thousands of times. He lives in Melbourne, Australia, with his wife. And occasionally, he turns into a strawberry.

More stories: StealthFiction.com

What's Next?

LET ME TELL YOU HOW I LOST MY EYES

A Short Story Collection by Sammy Fowler

Coming one day. Maybe. Probably not.

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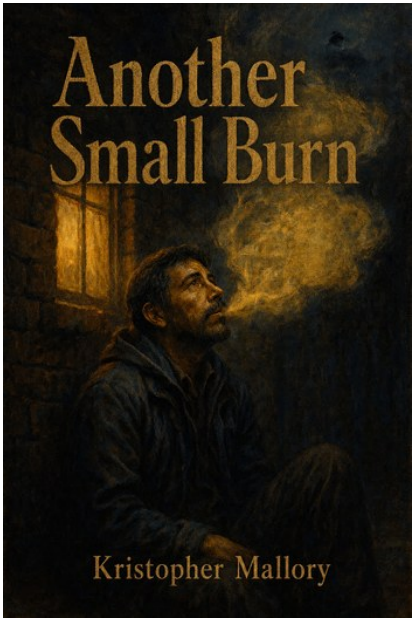
Hear It Read Aloud

Some stories are better heard in the dark.

Wrong Way Charlie has a complete audio narration, read by Jon, a digital voice. It runs 10 minutes and it's free: play it online, or download it as an MP3 or an audiobook with chapters.

Listen free at stealthfiction.com

More from Kristopher Mallory



ANOTHER SMALL BURN

This quiet horror short is now available on Amazon. For more information on this book, please visit Stealth Fiction.

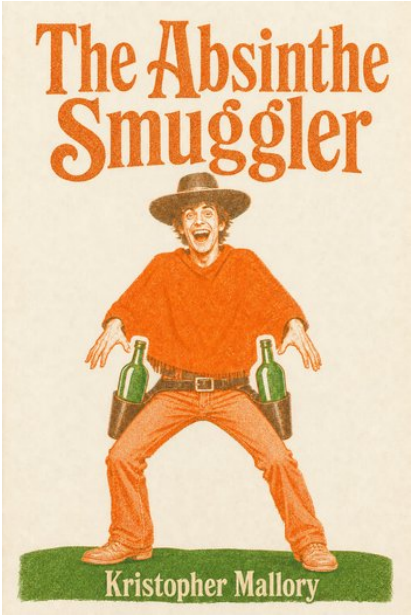
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Carlos can burn any memory into magic, the way everyone can now; the hard part is choosing which ones he can live without.

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Praise for Another Small Burn:

"That would make a fantastic Novella or novel, I was sad when it ended and wanted more." – *smoore*



THE ABSINTHE SMUGGLER

This comedy short is now available on Amazon. For more information on this book, please visit Stealth Fiction.

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A teenager on holiday in Madrid promises his friends two bottles of the green fairy, and customs turns out to be the easy part.
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THE SPECIAL CHRISTMAS ORNAMENTS OF MR. EVERETT

This Christmas horror story is now available on Amazon. For more information on this book, please visit Stealth Fiction.

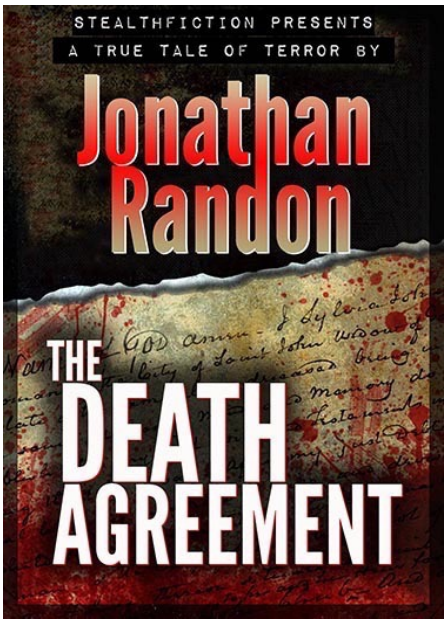
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Christmas Eve, a blizzard, and Hank agrees to sit with old Mr. Everett, twenty-two-time winner of the town's decoration contest, who insists he is not going crazy.

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Praise for The Special Christmas Ornaments of Mr. Everett:

"Quite a story, mixing snowy Christmas magic with delightfully dark humored chills." – *leavnsoon*



THE DEATH AGREEMENT

This horror novella is now available. For more information on this book, please visit Stealth Fiction.

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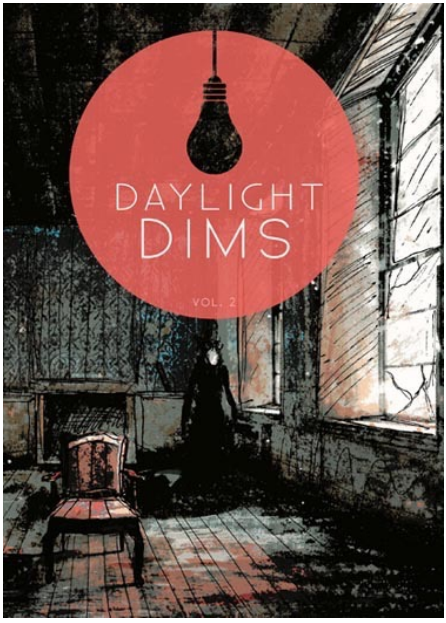
We made a pact. He lived up to his end by dying. I tried to live up to my end by following The Death Agreement.

What you will find within these pages is a true recounting of a man's life as seen through my eyes. It's almost an impossible task when some of what you see can't be real and what is real you may refuse to see… My name is Jon Randon and I'm going to tell you a story.

Praise for The Death Agreement:

"This was one of the best things I've ever read." – *GrandMoffJed*
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More from Stealth Fiction



DAYLIGHT DIMS
VOLUME TWO

This horror anthology is now available. For more information on this book, please visit the Daylight Dims website.

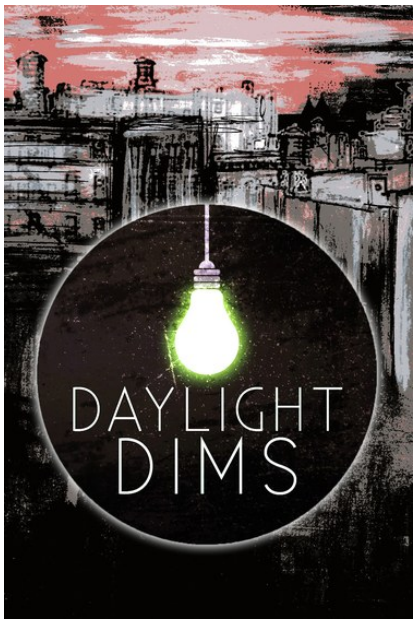
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Darkness descends again. Daylight Dims Volume Two features thirteen stories that cross the genres of surreal, dark fantasy, and heart-pounding dread. This annual horror anthology is guaranteed to twist your perception of horror. From the common, comfortable tropes to the more taboo, these handpicked tales have a literary aspect designed to showcase what true horror can be.

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Praise for Daylight Dims Vol. 2:

“This was probably one of the most entertaining collections of horror stories I've ever read. And I don't say this to suck up or to stroke any tail feathers. I was happy to have the opportunity to read through this before release, and I implore anyone on the fence about picking this up to do themselves a favor and take the plunge into the abyss. You will not be disappointed.” – *Human Gravy*



DAYLIGHT DIMS

VOLUME ONE

Second Edition — now with two new stories from the editors.

This horror anthology is now available. For more information on this book, please visit the Daylight Dims website.

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The editors chose 13 stories from over 100 premium submissions. DD contains some of the best horror around.

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Praise for Daylight Dims:

"This is a fantastic horror anthology. All 13 stories are exquisite. The book was not what I expected initially, as I thought that it might be all vampire or werewolf tales. Not so! These are original stories from authors of the macabre. From dark fantasy and pure suspense to classic horror tales, it shows the extraordinary scope of fantastical fright fiction. The stories in this anthology are a tour de force of fear, which will haunt you, terrify you, and stay with you." – S. Mahaffey, *"neverjudge"*