



Book Shriek Scotland transcript

Scottish Book Trust

Book Week Scotland.

Warning: This video for is an adult audience and not intended for children.

It features terrifying tales of crows, clowns, banshees, demons and typewriters.

Watch at your own peril.

[Intro - Sci-Fi Synth Music]

Book Shriek Scotland

Horror Anthology

[sound effects of crowd screaming]

[Mellow Woodwind Music.]

Who Is Heather Parry?

Kirsty Logan : [Gasp]. I've just finished Heather Parry's Book, Orpheus Builds A Girl. It was terrifying. And also wonderful. It is a true story, but also not. Which I think, is a very important lesson, for today. How do we know what's true? We'll be talking about this more. And you'll be hearing from Heather Parry, and her terrifying views.

Who is Kirsty Logan?

Heather Parry: Kirsty Logan is a Scottish horror novelist. She's written quite a few books now. This is her most recent one, which will be out next year. Um, and I do wonder if it is some kind of confession: *Now She Is Witch*. She of course, wouldn't write "Now, I am Witch", she would write as if it's someone else. But I do wonder, is it a cry for help? Is she being kept in her flat? In a cauldron? Is she turning into bats at night? We just don't know.

Why have you chosen these stories to put together in an anthology?

Kirsty: I chose these stories to share today, because I want to show that stories can change your life. And they will change your life, whether you like it or not.

Heather: We've chosen this set of stories in particular, because I think it really does give a range of the dangers at play in Scotland. It really is a quite horrifying country and, you know, I came to this country eight years ago, and I've been trying to leave ever since, and the stories won't let me.

What do you think Scotland's many folklore tales say about the country?

Kirsty: There are a lot of stories in this country... And they're all true. And maybe we should stop telling them. Maybe we're summoning something. Or maybe we should keep telling them. Maybe we're holding it back... There's just no way to know.

Heather: When I think about how these stories relate to the country that we're in. That country being Scotland. I think it really just goes to show what a truly haunted people the Scottish people are. And I feel like that goes for anyone who comes here, and anyone who will ever leave. It's very much the Hotel California of a country.

Who is John Lees?

Kirsty: John Lees writes comics. He writes horror comics. The thing is: Do we know where he gets these ideas from? He'll probably say that he makes them up. Or maybe he says he gets them from the Idea Shop, which is what a lot of writers say, but I'm not sure. I'm not sure how much of these clown stories are taken from real life. I think we need to think about that.

Heather: John Lees writes horror comics and I believe he is from Rutherglen. And what a lot of people don't know is, Rutherglen is where the rest of the country actually gets its clowns from. There's the uh, largest clown nursery in the whole of

Europe. I think the previous one was in Poland, somewhere. But the, the clown industry in, in Scotland has really taken off in the last ten years.

John Lees: My name is John Lees. I'm a comic-book writer, mostly of horror, and the two books I'm arguably best known for are *Sink* and *Hotel*. Both of which have clowns prominently featured in their iconography. I remember an interviewer asked me once; "Why do you feel compelled to tell stories about clowns?"

If you were a kid of my generation, growing up in the early 90's in Glasgow or one of its surrounding areas, Rutherglen in my case, odds are you'll know about this particular Urban Legend.

The story goes that a dirty old blue van was trawling through the streets, on the hunt for lone children. And inside, the van was filled with clowns. Supposedly, these were escapees from the state hospital for the criminally insane, in nearby Carstairs. Accounts varied in describing what happened to the children snatched by these clowns. Some said the kids were killed. Some said they were eaten. Some said they were turned into clowns themselves, their mouths scarred up with razors. One oddly quaint variation was that the side of your mouth would be slit, then the clowns would tickle you, to make you laugh and make the scars grow bigger. But most often, what you heard was that the kids would just disappear, never to be seen again.

And this really caught on. School dances had to be cancelled, due to the large volume of children reluctant to be out after dark, and there were instances of playgrounds going into hysterics if a blue van happened to park by the school gates. At one point, they had to send a local policeman into our class to tell us there was absolutely no such thing as Blue Van Clowns... Which as a kid, only serves to convince you that the grownups [laugh] are hiding something.

I would have been about seven years old at the peak of Glasgow's clown mania. Clearly, all this mass panic had a profound effect on me, as I started to have a recurring nightmare. In this dream, I'm alone on an empty street. I'm walking towards a blue van, and I know what 's gonna be in there. I know I don't want to be here. But because it's a nightmare, I can't stop. I keep on walking, closer and closer,

my vision honing in on the handle at the back door, knowing what comes next. The handle clicks, the door slowly opens, and out steps this hideous, filthy man with his limbs all coiled up, his head turned down and away from me. His feet drop down onto the concrete, he stands upright, and he's so tall, like a giant, towering over me. At last, he raises his head and I see the white face, the red nose...

It's a clown.

Then he smiles. His lips part, exposing a mouth full of crooked, broken, yellow-brown teeth. And the smile keeps getting wider and wider, revealing more and more teeth, surely bigger than any human mouth can be. I want to scream, but I can't. Then I think I'm going to laugh...

And then I would wake up.

It was a sunny summer afternoon, when everything came to a head. It was the school holidays and I was round visiting my cousin James, and he hits me with; "We're going clown hunting. You coming?"

Him and his friends had got the notion in their heads that if no-one else is gonna stop the Blue Van Clowns, it would be up to us. So we all ventured into my Aunt's garden hut in search of makeshift weapons... [laugh] I ended up with a hammer, I believe.

Adequately armed, we embarked on our heroic quest. Honestly, it was a lot of fun. It was a glorious, balmy day, the sun shining bright in the sky, the kind of day that's not too common in Glasgow, even in the summer. We laughed, we joked, we chased each other around, but... As afternoon gave way to early evening and the sun started to wane, I started to get an intrusive, unsettling thought:

What would we do if we actually found the pack of clowns?

We all clutched our weapons tight, making big talk about how we'd use them, but how much good would they actually do us in a fight for our lives? And then, we found the blue van. A detour into a park had led us down a dirt trail behind some houses, and abandoned at its end was this faded blue van, its back facing us. It was like the real world peeled away, and I was in my nightmare again. Walking towards

the van, wanting to turn and run, but feeling unable. And all I could do was fixate on the door handle, waiting for that click. Waiting for the clown to emerge with his ghoulish grin, only this time I would see what happens after he grins. This time I would see...

Then one of my cousin's friends rushed past me, swung open the door... And there was no clowns inside. The van was empty, save for an old mattress and some discarded newspapers. We hopped in and out of the van and ran around it, whooping and cheering as if we'd achieved something, as if we'd conquered something. As for me, there was certainly a whole lot of relief that my nightmare hadn't come to life, and indeed, after that day I don't believe I ever had that dream again. But on some level, I think there must have been a lot of disappointment that our mission had come to nothing.

It was dark by the time we finally got back home. These were the days before smartphones, so we'd all just been missing for the day. My mum was furious, told me I was grounded. By the time the summer was over, everyone had moved on from the clowns and I guess I did too, eventually, for the most part. But some doubts lingered. Who did that van belong to? Why did they leave it out there? Did they go back for it, after we'd been there? For a little while, after that day of the clown hunt, those questions ran through my mind as I lay in bed, staring at the ceiling, waiting to fall asleep. And every so often, just as my eyes were starting to close, I'd get a disquieting thought:

What if, when my eyes opened, and I blinked a few times to adjust to the dark, I became aware that I wasn't alone in the room? What if, taking shape out of the darkness, my eyes settled on a figure with dirty clothes and rotten teeth? I'd imagine him standing there, staring, grinning, letting the silence hang in the air. Waiting until I knew He knew I was awake. And then, the clown would open its ragged, scarred mouth and say; "You found my bed, so I found yours... Ha. Ha. Ha."

Why are there so many creepy stories centred around clowns?

Kirsty: Here's the thing about clowns... You can't trust them, and you also don't know where they are. We don't think there are any clowns in here right now, but we, we can't say for sure. Because they could be anywhere. We think because we know about their big red noses and their big floppy shoes and the way that they can fit into a small car, we think that we know them. We think that they're our friends. All my friends have big floppy shoes and... I don't really know what to make of that, I've never asked them why.

Heather: I have actually been doing a social experiment, though. Where I have been paying people around Glasgow to dress as clowns and make friends with Kirsty Logan in particular, to see if she even notices, or whether there are this many clowns in Glasgow, that it will just pass unnoticed.

Kirsty: As I said, they fit into those small cars. So to me, that suggests they can be anywhere. They could fit anywhere. If they can fit so many into one car, really, they could be anywhere. They could be under the chair... We don't know. I'm not gonna look, because sometimes it's better not to know.

What do clowns represent?

Heather: I think, if we think about it, we can see that what a clown represents is forced humour in the face of humiliation. Yes, we're all laughing, but we're laughing at a person. And I think, even when you're a child, you can see that there is an adult inside that clown costume.

Or maybe it's not a costume, that's just who they are. But you know it's a person, you instinctively know that as you grow older, labour will be forced out of you, by capitalism. And know you can try and make a joke out of it, but really it's, you're trapped in there, you've got to labour, you've got to, um, put the pies in faces, you've got to wear the silly red nose. And I think knowing that this is what will come of your adulthood, that really is a pain that will stay with you for the rest of your life.

Have you ever met a clown?

Kirsty: I don't think I've met a clown in real life. However, as I said, my friends do all have floppy shoes... And sometimes, they ask me to smell a flower that they're wearing and then it sprays me with water, so... Maybe I have. Maybe everyone I meet is a clown. I, I...Couldn't say. There's just so much in this world that we don't know and we can never understand. Um, I love that about the world, I love the mystery of the world. I don't love clowns, though . They can... Go, away, back to the circus. Um, I would be ok with that.

But as I said: They could be anywhere, they could go anywhere. We just, we just don't know.

Who is Amanda Thomson?

Heather: Amanda Thomson is a very well-loved and respected visual artist and writer in Scotland. Um, she lectures as well.

And I do, I have heard rumours that she does actually live in the trees, and this is why she is so au fait with birds, if you will. Um, I personally don't believe these things. I also always believe that, where there is a rumour about someone, it really is saying something about us. And when we say that a visual artist must live with the birds, what we're really saying is we don't understand the creative process.

Kirsty: Amanda Thompson is someone who I know to be a lecturer, an academic and a writer. She has a book called *Belonging*, which is all about the concept of home. She also appears to be a bird expert, which I didn't know. A Bird... -ologist, if you will. Um, and again, this is what makes me suspicious. She writes about home, but also she knows a lot about birds. And the thing is, birds don't have a home, do they? They fly, and they make a new home. And that is why, um, you can't trust birds.

Amanda: There was at one time, a large rookery in the Alders at Coulnakyle. Captain MacDonald, then holding the farm, 1826, vowed its destruction. He hired a squad of men and boys and then set them to work.

The boys tore down the nests and the men kept up a constant fuselade, so as to prevent the rooks from settling. The war went on for some days. Now and again, a

bird came too near and fell prey to the marksman, but most were wary and kept at a safe distance. At last, the rooks seemed to recognise they were beaten. They held a gathering in a neighbouring field. There was much cawing and conferring, but no reporter to give their speeches. The question was, in due time, settled. The rooks, as if acting under orders, arose and flew towards the alders. But instead of settling on the trees, they mounted up, high above, so as to be safe from all harm. Then they went through a kind of march, sailing calmy to and fro, and doubtless casting many a longing glance on their old homes. By and by, they altered their tune. The march became a quickstep, merging into a wild, whirling, co-mingling dance. It was, as a spectator described it, for all the world like a "Reel of Tulloch".

"The dancers quick and quicker flew, they reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleek it". Then suddenly, there was a stop, with a great ca-cawing. Then utter quietness. Out from the rest flew a leader, took his place in front, and like an arrow from a bow, started off. The others fell into line and followed. Silently, the whole body winged their flight, straight for the boat of Cromdale, where, in the fir wood over the Spey, they established their new home. And where, unmolested, they have dwelt from generation to generation ever since. The Highlanders hold that it is unlucky to disturb a rookery; and it was noted that Captain Macdonald, some years after, had reluctantly to flit from Coulmakyle, and to make his home at Clury which he never loved so well.

What makes birds so scary?

Kirsty: Birds have very small eyes, and that is very frightening. Um, they have very small eyes, but they can see very well... And how does that work? I mean, Amanda's a Birdologist, so... I suppose she knows. I'm not a Birdologist, so, I don't know. I just know that their eyes are really small... Um, and the bones are small as well. But then, birds are small, so... That probably makes sense, actually. I will let, I will let the birds have that one, that's ok. I think they're scary because they go up. And we can't go up... unless we're underwater.

Heather: Of course, there's nothing inherently wrong with birds. And again, I think it is a type of bigotry to say that they are creepy, that they have small eyes, you know. A lot of people have small eyes. I have an incredibly small head, and if anyone was to say that a person with small eyes would be particularly creepy, I would find that a cause for personal offense.

Kirsty: I think birds might come from the pits of Hell. Um...

Heather: We of course, know where birds come from. Because we understand Evolution. The scientific method is very clear on how the species in this country, in this world, have evolved over time.

What are the distinct connections between Scotland and it's birds?

Kirsty: Scotland has a lot of birds. Um, I think because we have quite a lot of portals to Hell, in Scotland, Um... Again, I can't say for sure. I get, I just feel it. I just feel like there are a lot of portals to Hell, um, in Scotland.

Heather: I think every person who is currently living in Scotland has had a creepy experience with a bird. Because we all live fairly close to the coast, and if you spend any time near sea, you will see a Seagull, which, let me tell you, is actually called a Herring Gull. They have committed murder. They do commit murder on a daily basis. They are terrible social criminals and we just have to keep quiet about it, because no-one would ever visit.

Kirsty: The thing i-, the thing about birds... Um, I actually did marry a bird once, and... I'm not saying that that's why I have these sort of negative feelings towards them, but... It can't help. It really can't help. We're not in touch anymore. I mean, it's for the best, but it didn't go that well, so um... I wish them well...

Um, I wish we could stop talking about birds.

Who is Anna Cheung?

Kirsty: Anna Cheung is a poet, and she's bringing us a story about the Bean-nighe. Who is a hag who washes clothes. Um, I identify quite intensely with that. Um, I think I was born a hag, actually. Um, I feel like I have real Hag Energy. Um, and I think I have since I was a baby, really. And a Hag Baby might seem a strange concept, but if anyone looks at pictures of me as a baby, I think they will... They will understand.

Heather: Anna Cheung is a hugely exciting, um, young poet from Glasgow. She has actually written a poetry collection. Or you could say academic, uh, thesis, called *Where Decay sleeps*. Which to me, asks the question, what does it mean to be dead, really? Is it decay that sleeps? Or when we are decomposing in the ground, is it then that we are truly alive? This is why it makes her such an intelligent person to include.

Anna Cheung: Hi. My name is Anna Cheung and I'm the author of *Where Decay sleeps*. I'd like to tell you the tale about the Bean-nighe. But first of all, who was she? In Scottish folklore, the Bean-nighe haunted desolate streams, washing the blood from clothes and linen. It is said that they were spirits of women who died in childbirth and that their spirits were doomed to wash bloody garments after death. Some believe that she had the power to see into the future. Others believe that she could grant wishes, while other stories were... Far more sinister.

Shhh, did you hear that? Let's tread carefully, and I'll tell you the tale of the Bean-nighe of Glen Aros.

In the dark of the night, over the trees of Glen Aros,
a cry coiled from the forest's strangling roots,
like a serpent ensnared in a woodland web.

Aldith laid on her bed, eyelids heavy in dream,
hair latticed across rose-tinted cheeks.
Pale, yet feverish, in a fitful sleep.
The sound slithered into the shadows,
through creaky windows and splintered doors,
poisonous and sinewy in the deadly silence.
The cry was half-human, half-creature
and dragged Aldith from the arms of slumber.
She stumbled barefoot, onto the stone-cold floor.
She wandered, weary, in to the woodland,
the thorns, pines and nettles snagging flesh,
but, finally, she found her way to the water's edge.
There, bent over by brook, she saw
a woman, as gnarled and crooked as ancient trees.
Her claw-like feet clung onto the lichen rocks
as she scrubbed a pile of blood-stained rags.
Closer and closer, Aldith crept, but alas,
the old hag had already foreseen.
With one eye, the creature honed in on the girl,
and spat, snaggle-toothed, into the brook.
Aldith recoiled at the sight of the crone.
"I am a seer, messenger from the other world.
Come near, and knowledge I will impart to your heart's desire."

Curious, the girl stepped closer and asked for her name.

"Some call me Ban-sìth, some call me Lavandière.

I am Bean-Nighe, the midnight washer-woman.

Why be feart of me? Come hither, and I shall tell you more."

Aldith inched forward; the rocks were slippery-sleek.

"I wash the clothes of mortals, soon to drift
on their underworld journey to Death's Abyss. Come, look."

Upon hearing those words, the girl's heart lurched -
there, against the hag's saggy breasts clutched, she saw
her own frock, sodden on rocks and blotched with blood.

She staggered, and fell, into the water.

What's so scary about household chores?

Kirsty: I think household chores are the true terror. Um, I think the fact that we have to live in homes that need to be clean is um... Cruel, really. Um, I think dust could be our friend. Um, and again, could be anything in there. Dust, very small, um... Bird's eyes, clowns, could be anything. Um, which doesn't have to be a bad thing. Maybe we could, make peace with it? I'm not sure, because I don't like clowns and birds. But... But, I think there's a conversation to be had. That's all I'll say.

Heather: Household chores actually feature quite a lot in folklore. And that's because to us, they represent a kind of Sisyphean task. What we like to believe is that we have free will, and that every day we wake up and we are making free

choices to go about in the world. To create, to love, to procreate. But really, we're just coming back home and doing the washing or mopping the floor. And the floor never gets any cleaner. And this does really represent the kind of, pain of being an adult.

Could we hire characters from folklore to do our household chores?

Kirsty: I think if it were possible to employ the characters from folk tales to do our domestic labour, and assuming that they consented to that and that we could compensate them appropriately. Um, I don't know that currency would be the best. Um, they might want bones, um, they might want souls, um, they might want babies. We don't know. We can ask them, though. There might be a union, um, perhaps we could discuss it with them. um, I think it could work, though. Um, I really think it could. I think, you know, we would need to make sure that everybody felt that it was a fair deal, um... But I think, I think it could be done. I think the, the witch, the Hansel and Gretel witch, um... She's good at cooking, you know? So, I don't see why those skills couldn't be used for good. Um, no I think, I think that could, that could work really well. Um, I'm glad that, I thought of it.

What does the word 'Crone' mean to you?

Kirsty: 'Crone' is a word that's very dear to my heart. Again, I think I was born a crone. Um, so I like that, I really like that. I also really look forward to, my wrinkles becoming much larger, um, as time passes, as it does for all of us. Um, I would like to keep things in there. Um, I would like to hide things, maybe small messages or, items that I need to carry around with me, so... I'm looking forward to that, I think it's gonna be a good time. Also, I like that I can um, elbow children out of the way in the street. To be fair, I haven't seen crones doing that... Maybe I could start it. It could be a trend.

Heather: When I think of the word 'Crone', I really do picture Kirsty Logan. She's always had, I will say it again, "Haggitude". In fact, I've seen photos of when she was

a child, and she really was just like a tiny, little, crone-woman. If anything, she's just gotten larger.

Who is Ailsa Dixon?

Heather: Ailsa Dixon is a oral storyteller, um, who's just really coming up in the literature world of Scotland. She's a very exciting figure to keep your eye on. Um, I also think she represents a link to Scotland's past of oral storytelling history, which we don't engage with so much today because we're obsessed with writing things down. And if we think about why we are obsessed with writing things down, it's a type of confession. We think that if we put things on paper, they will be removed from us. But they don't. They sit in your brain and then they sit in your desk, and then they burn. They burn inside of you. This fear of being found out for what you've done. Ailsa's free of all that.

Kirsty: Ailsa Dixon is a storyteller from Aberdeenshire. And the thing about Aberdeenshire is, it's got a lot of stories. So she's very well placed to be telling them.

Ailsa Dixon: My grandparents lived on a farmhouse on the Orkney Isles. And if you were to walk out of their house, down the path, round the hill and across the stream, you would come to a cottage. The sort of cottage that you find all over the Orkney Isles. A ruined one, with the walls half tumbling down. The roof long since gone and the door blown in, eons ago. But this cottage... Well, this cottage is special. Because when my grandfather's grandfather was still just a boy, a man lived in that cottage. His name was Tam, and he lived alone because he never married or had children, and his parents had long since died. So he was a fairly lonely man. The highlight of his month was Market Day, when he would take what little he had to sell, gather up the bits of money he had and head down to Stromness, for the market. And he enjoyed the market, he loved it a lot. Because, well, he got to talk with people he didn't often get to see. His old friends and the other farmers. The fishermen from about the islands. He got to learn a bit about their lives and then, if there was time before the sun started to set, he'd go and have a wee dram in the pub. But Tam... He never wanted to walk home in the dark. He always made sure there was plenty time to get back to his cottage before the sun set. But today, this particular day, when this particular story happened. It was one of those September

days, it's a-almost the end of Summer, almost the start of Autumn, when the sun seems to disappear far sooner than anyone is expecting, as if it's been chased by the night, right over the globe. And when Tam finally, after his third or maybe fourth dram, opened up the door of the pub, he was almost blown back by the fierce Orkney gale. And he looked up and out to see the sun staining the sea scarlet, over at the horizon. And the moon starting to come up into the sky. He curled his coat closer around him and walked home in the gathering darkness. His way lit by the moonlight, and by the thousands of Orkney stars. But he walked faster. And faster.

And faster.

And then he heard something. Something that was not his own heavy breathing. It was not the sound of his own footsteps on the path. It wasn't even the way the wind whistled through the core, or the rush of the sea as it lapped forwards and backwards, along the beach. It wasn't even the cawing of the Gulls. It was hard, heavy, breathing. He turned around... And he saw, a horse. Standing at the edge of a field, and then he looked closer. When at first, it looked like a horse and a rider, now he saw that that was not the case. For what had looked like a rider was actually just a torso, fused onto the horses back. And the rider's head... There was no, there were no eyes in that head, it was just covered over. One great skull, and the rider's arms were long. They dangled down onto the ground and he had webs between each and every finger, but the fingers were more like claws. And then he looked closer... And his blood chilled in his veins. Because the horse and it's rider, they had not one scrap of skin upon it's body. [gasp]

Tam, Tam, he could see the lungs inflating and deflating beneath the creatures ribcage. He could see it's great heart hammering inside both of it's chests. It could-, He could see the eyes in that horse's head rolling backwards into it's skull. He could see the tendons tensed and ready to leap. He could see the blood pumping through it's veins. He could see the small intestine. He could see the liver, pale and strange. He could see everything.

And bile rose in the back of Tam's throat, but he was running, because he knew this was The Nuckelavee. This was the creature that would strip all of the flesh from your bones and throw you in the bottom of a lake. And he knew he had not one chance in Hell if he was not to cross some running water. So he was running, running, running,

running towards a stream and he heard the Nuckelavee start to trot, start to canter, start to gallop behind him and it was gaining on him. Getting faster and faster and faster, and Tam felt his heart, pumping inside his chest as he sprinted, tripping over the rocks and stones on the uneven-made path, as he saw the Nuckelavee gaining on him. It's great skinless body getting closer and closer and closer. And he watched, as the Nuckelavee got one long arm and [scratching sound], Scratched at Tam's back. And Tam felt the hot, sticky blood running down his back. Felt the pain course through him, but he did not pay it any heed and he. Was. Running. Faster and faster and faster until, he fell.

Into a running river. He felt the cold water rushing over him, climbed out onto the shore at the other side, and knew no more. He didn't hear the cry of anguish from the Nuckelavee. Didn't see it disappear into the night. The next thing he knew was the sun coming up again that morning.

And he told everyone he could about his time with the Nuckelavee, but nobody believed him. But they must have liked the story though, because the story survived, because I heard it. And now, you have too.

Why are some stories scarier when they're read aloud?

Heather: Telling stories aloud, rather than writing them down, is a really good way to not get caught by the police. Or your boss, or your partner, or whoever you want to keep secrets from. What we should really take away from Ailsa's piece is that you should never leave a paper trail.

The thing is, when you are telling a story out loud, or simply talking about yourself. Or just humming, or even making a series of unintelligible noises, you have to realise in the modern day, that anyone could be listening to you. You could be being recorded from any kind of device, from any kind of uh, person nearby. They have a phone, all of this is logged onto a gigantic database.

Kirsty: [deep breath] I think stories are scarier when they're read aloud because we can't escape from them. Uh, we can close our eyes; we can't close our ears. Unless we have earplugs... Or headphones. Or unless we just can't hear. Um... It's complicated. It's very complicated.

What's so scary about horses?

Kirsty: Here's the thing about horses: They are frightening.

They are big. In a way, the opposite of birds, really. They can't go up. Um, and they have, quite big eyes. And bones are definitely big. Um, I don't really hold it against them. Again, birds can't help it. Horses can't help it either. Um, but just because it's not their fault, it doesn't mean I can't be angry about it. And, they're very frightening. Their teeth, also, are big. That's not really their fault. You know, teeth are... bones, kind of, but in your mouth. Um...

Heather: Horses are terrifying, I think we can all agree with that. Um, people think it's because they're really large, or they run wild in the fields, or they may just kick you at any one time, but it's not really that. It's because we all remember the banking adverts from the kind of, late 90's. Where all the horses were running along the beach. This brings in our fear of the coast. We know that too much water isn't a good thing. But it also makes us fear of the banking industry, of being adults, and of responsibility, and of financial failure. It really comes back to a real Freudian place, where we just want to do well.

Are you Scared of horses?

Kirsty: I am so scared of horses that I... Don't want to discuss it anymore. I... Don't think there's one in here... But again, you just don't know. You just don't know. Um, you know, we've talked about dust, we've talked about birds, we've talked about eyes, we've talked about teeth.

... I don't know why we were talking about those things, because now all I can think about is horses. And I can't. I simply cannot.

Heather: Many people are scared of horses, and it is a very common fear, but in fact we should be scared of the cows. You know, we don't think of them, we think of them as gentle creatures, they're not. If you look very closely, they're like, really,

really, really muscley. Um, and they travel in herds, and if you walk by them in a field, they may charge at you. They're very angry. Cows are very angry people. I have had to escape cows twice in my life so far.

Who is Garth Marengi?

Kirsty: Garth Marengi is an author and dream-weaver. Uh, he writes tales of the fantastique. What I would say, they're not so fantastique to me. To me, they're more tales of... Horroer. I feel... Horroefied, by them. And I think everyone will be, when they hear the story.

Heather: Garth Marengi is a dream-weaver, a visionary, peddler of the fantastique. The story we're gonna get from him is from his upcoming book, TerrorTome, which will literally be a tome of terror, which is just about as much terror as you can handle.

Garth Marengi: I lowered my voice to a whisper, keeping one eye on the lounge door.

"Look, I'll level with you. I'm in a highly destructive and damaging psychosexual relationship with my typewriter."

"Then it is a cursed artifact."

"Well, you tell me!" I said, exasperated. "You're the one reading minds."

He stared at me for a moment, doing just that.

"I see you have a subconscious urge to do it with typebars."

"Yes, I know that. It's all to do with the socially unacceptable love for my own writing. But now it's become something else, entirely."

I pulled the typewriter's list from my back pocket and handed it over.

"These are its demands."

He ran his eye briefly over the typewriter's words, rolling his tongue, quizzically, against his cheek.

"Who owned it before you?"

"No idea. It's eons old."

"Eons?" he said, looking up suddenly.

"Tang dynasty, according to the manual, though the English translation's appalling."

"And where is it now?" he asked.

"I thought you could read minds."

He paused for a moment, thinking. Then shook his head; "For some reason, I can't pick up *it's* thoughts."

I pointed conspiratorially, at the lounge door behind us. "In there..."

He glanced over at the door, the expression building on his face quite unusual for a Satanist. He looked...Scared.

"Who are the Pupils of Pain?" He asked, examining the list again.

"Well, I assume I'm one of them." I said. "But it's also after my editor, Roz. Luckily, she still has dignity and a moral compass."

"You do realise 'Blank page of unknown suffering' refers to your own soul?"

"Really? I presumed that was already taken."

He looked at me, his expression grave.

"This is referring to a plane of suffering, *beyond* Hell."

"*Beyond* Hell?" I repeated. "What on Earth would suffering be like *beyond* Hell?"

The lounge door burst open, swinging back hard against the kitchen wall.

Fortunately, I'd attached stoppers when I'd moved in.

In the room beyond us, motionless upon my writing desk, sat the Typewriter.
Glaring.

The satanist dropped the sheet of paper.

"It's been eavesdropping!" He said.

"Yeah. it channels the subconscious, I'm afraid." I said "Which does erode privacy. It also goes crackly, like a sparkler, and shoots barbed hooks through my nipple teats."

"That's a thing of evil." He yelled out, suddenly. "An evil beyond Lucifer. an evil *beyond* Hell."

With that, he fled from my kitchen, and hurled himself through the front door, satanic robe flapping wildly as he ran off down the stairwell. I saw he'd done one on my tiles. As I made a pretence of reaching for the Ajax and some J-Cloths, I heard the words I'd been dreading, deep inside my head:

"Oh. Dear."

"Morning." I said, and began whistling.

"Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!" ...[whisper] That's the typewriter speaking.

I sprinkled some Ajax on the offending tile. "What's wrong, out of ribbon again?"

"Turn Around!"

"Beg your pardon?" I said, commencing to scrub at the tile. Never had cleaning a soiled stain seemed more alluring.

"I Said, Turn Around, Now!"

I realised there was no way of avoiding it. No way at all.

I turned round.

"Punishment Time!"

[Video Winding sound]

Garth: There. To find out what that punishment was... Buy the book.

What is the most erotic part of the screenwriting process for you?

Heather: For me, the most erotic part of the writing process is the physical action of putting it down on paper, or into, transferring your ideas into a computer, if you will. Because this is the pinnacle of creation. And of course, creation is what we are all, as humans, geared towards. Um, it's a very satisfactory feeling to, you know, take the horrible thoughts that happen inside of your head, and put them out. Put them out, put them on the doorstep. Let the goblins take them away.

Kirsty: I find the whole process of writing erotic. Um, horrifying and erotic at the same time, which is quite confusing. Um, which is why writing is quite tiring, which is why it takes such a long time. Um, because to be eroticised and horrified at the same time, um, takes quite a lot out of you. It's really important to keep your vitamins up, as well. So um, definitely, things like a smoothie, um, that's really good. Um, that can really help. And you can put like, um, chia seeds and things, um... It's um... They're kind of inherently unerotic, chia seeds as well, so it, sort of... It helps to tamp it down a little bit. So I would, I would recommend that. They are a bit like bird's eye's which is a bit scary. Um... but you know, it's about balance, in life, I think. The erotic, and the horrifying, and um, chia seeds and eyes and... You can't have just one or the other. Not just eyes, and not just seeds.

Do all writers have to be in love with their own writing?

When does it become too much?

Heather: People ask me whether all writers have a socially unacceptable relationship with their own work. But that makes me ask, what is Socially Unacceptable? What is so wrong about the love between a person and a book? What is so wrong about the love between a person and a manuscript? I like to sleep next to my work at night. It keeps me safe.

Kirsty: I think all writers hate what they write, as much as they love it. Um, and that's why we get very tired and we need to have a lot of naps. Um, often I'm criticised for napping more than I write, but I say it's very important and it's part of

the process. It's very difficult to be caught in between those two places all the time and to um, have to write our nightmares. So the more naps we have, the more nightmares we have, and the more things we have to write about, so... It's really part of the work. I consider it part of my daily work, to be asleep. In fact... I don't think I'm asleep at the moment. But then, that would be true of a nightmare. So who knows? Who knows anything?

Have you ever had a relationship with an inanimate object?

Heather: Have I ever had a relationship with an inanimate object? Why, what have you heard?

Kirsty: So, most writers will write on a laptop, or a computer, or even a typewriter, um... I don't believe that any of them are safe. I actually think it's safer to, um, write on something that can be burned. Because then, you can destroy it, um, before it destroys you. So, um, things like, on sand, is good. Um, it does take quite a long time to write a novel um, on sand. We have big beaches in Scotland, though, so um, that's really helpful. That does help. So if you see words in the sand, um, don't walk on them... Yet. You can walk on them later.

What was it like working with Heather Parry on this project?

Kirsty: Working with Heather Parry on this project has been... Erotique. Fantastique. Horror-ique. Um, I hope to never have to repeat it. Um, she owns a part of my soul now. I didn't mean to give it to her, she tricked me. It's the shoes. The shoes got me.

What was it like working with Kirsty Logan on this project?

Heather: I, of course, love working with Kirsty Logan. Um she's a brilliant mind. Well... She's a brilliant creative mind. Um, it does pose some challenges to work with her, because she does believe that there are clowns in dust. But she was so concerned with my big feet, that she didn't notice my tiny bird head.

What do you hope viewers will take away from this visual anthology?

Heather: I think Book Shriek Scotland tells us that really, every story is a scary story. You've just got to really think about what it means. You know, you might tell a tale of a mouse and a piece of cheese but really, what is the fundamental damage with that mouse? What does the cheese represent? Everything is scary.

Kirsty: I hope that viewers will take away from this, that Scotland is a place of extreme terror, but also extreme eroticism. And also; birds, horses, dust, clowns and laundry. Um, some of them might come as a surprise. Some, maybe not. I don't know how knowledgeable people are about Scotland. But I hope at least one of them will come as a pleasant surprise, and I hope at least one will be a horrifying warning. Because you must love Scotland, but also... Beware.

[Outro - funky guitar music playing]

Starring

Heather Parry as Heather Parry

&

Kirsty Logan as Kirsty Logan

Storytellers

Anna Cheung

Ailsa Dixon

John Lees

Garth Marengi

Amanda Thomson

Scottish Book Trust

Nyla Ahmad

Philippa Cochrane

Danny Scott

Filmmaker

Jarvis Gray

[Outro music ends - Vinyl record popping sounds]

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