

# Unremembered Loss

*For all the news and information from the world of Rathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss*

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How often can I say I'm doing something completely different this month and really mean it? Well, hopefully at least one more time. This month I'm writing about jigsaw puzzles with a twist. I hope it inspires you.

Be sure to get next month's Christmas story by getting on the mail list by going to [douglasgclarke.com/lists](http://douglasgclarke.com/lists)

## Paintings of A Good Tale

My love affair with jigsaw puzzles has been a long and troubled one. I've always loved jigsaw puzzles - the challenge, the seeing of the picture forming from all the little bits of color, the finding of the piece that is just the right shape or has just the right splash of blue.

All these things draw me to jigsaw puzzles. But, then there's the down side of the relationship. The time, the eyes strain, the space occupied to hold all the pieces, and of course the missing piece.

Over the last year I've been looking for projects that blur the lines between what we typically view as products. Some of this searching brought me back to jigsaw puzzles. How could I make a jigsaw puzzle fresh and new?

Three months ago Emma and I bought a jigsaw puzzle. It was billed as a mystery in a box. The producer had taken an old Sherlock Holmes story and created a picture to go with it. In the box was the story, which ended just before Sherlock solved the mystery. The idea was to then build the puzzle, for which you had no picture, and then use it to help figure out who did it. Once you guessed you could hold the rest of the story up to a

mirror and see if you solved the mystery.

Emma and I put the puzzle together, didn't figure it out, and then started talking about how we could make a better story and puzzle experience.

A week later the October short story prompt for the Writers 750 challenge came out: a skeleton, a tombstone and something impossible. Not the most inspiring prompt, but good enough. I started thinking about what story to write, but nothing jumped in front of me and said, "Write me." Not until a few days later.



That's when I came upon a picture by Bill Washington.

When I saw the picture it yelled at me. I knew I wanted to write this story. I wrote Bill asking permission to base a story on his picture. He said yes and a few days later I had my story finished.

I sent the story to Bill and he loved it. That's when the puzzle idea popped back into my head. I had a story and a picture. I was ready to go, but wait. I looked at what I had and said to myself, and maybe Emma, too, "What can I do to make this better?"

The answer was to tell a story with the puzzle. I contact Bill and asked him if he would like to make some pictures based on my story? He was intrigued and after some discussions he went off to create five more picture based on my story.

I used Bill's original picture as the center piece of the set as a 11.5" x 17" puzzle. Bill's other pictures were turned into one 8.5" x 11" puzzle and four 5" x 7" puzzles.

I then created a 12 page booklet using my short story and Bill's pictures as the illustrations.

Then came the actual manufacturing of the puzzles. What to put the puzzles in turned out to be one of the tougher parts of the project. We looked at traditional boxes. We looked at non-traditional packaging from tubes to cloth bags.



After a lot of mocking up and a test run using traditional boxes, we settled on an 8.5" long, 4" diameter picture-wrapped cardboard tube.

We then had to find the right paper - adhesive backed, 13" x 19". The right cardboard, 26" x 38" pieces cut into quarters. The tubes, which turned out to be way too expensive at 8.5" long. A 36" tube cost less, so we bought long tubes and cut them down ourselves. Doing the tubes this way, the white press-in caps for the tubes cost more than the tubes.

Then off to the printer, who was great and worked with me to get the colors just right, then back home to adhere the pictures to the cardboard and the wrappers to the tubes. We then got all the puzzles cut, put into plastic bags and stuffed into the tubes along with the story.

Now we're ready to introduce our first story puzzle, "The Journey." It is the story of Elron and his journey to find his missing friend.

We created 50 puzzles in our first run - enough to capture some efficiencies of scale and not so large that if we don't sell many we won't lose too much money.

The puzzles are going on sale today for \$35 including tax. If you want one, let me know right away. I'll sign the story and the first 50 will be serialized so you can prove you have one of the originals.

All the best,

Douglas G. Clarke

## Paintings of A Good Tale

1000 words to ignite your imagination

Six jigsaw puzzles that tell a story

