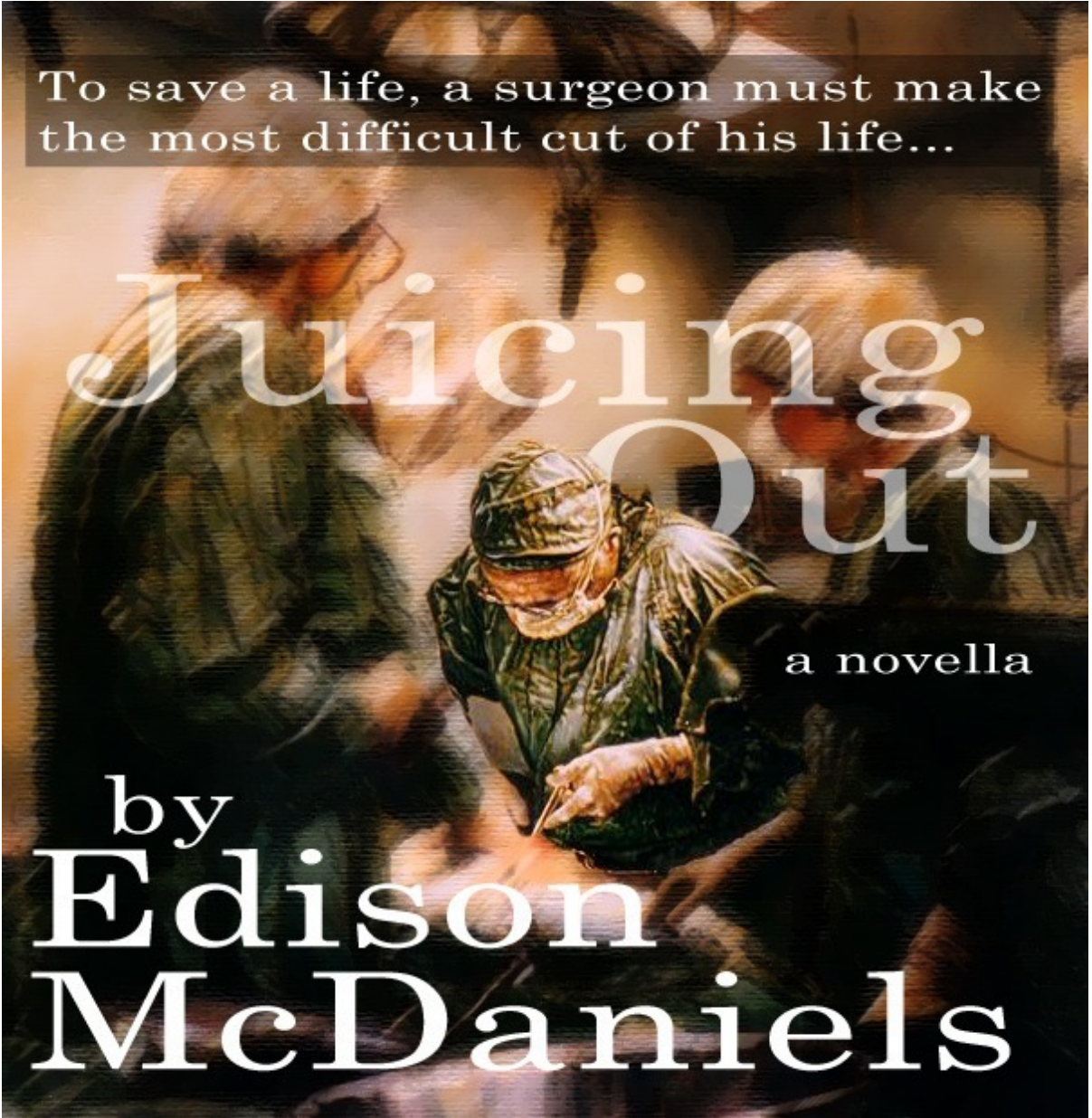




To save a life, a surgeon must make
the most difficult cut of his life...

Juicing Out

a novella

by
**Edison
McDaniels**

JUICING OUT

A novella by Edison McDaniels

The buzz about Edison McDaniels' fiction...

"An **amazingly** talented writer..."

—Taylor Polites, author of *The Rebel Wife*

"Heart breaking, engaging, and **absolutely fantastic**. I would give this book 6 stars if I could."

—Darrin Buxman, one of Amazon's top book reviewers

"A **vivid, engrossing story** of battle...a compelling read, largely because of the **skill** with which McDaniels unfolds his characters' stories."

—Brid Nowlan, reviewing *Not One Among Them Whole* for *IndieReader*

"Think **Stephen King** meets Michael Crichton..."

—Bill Glose, Book Editor of *Virginia Living*

"A page turning **thriller**..."

—Tim Farrington, author of *The Monk Downstairs*, discussing *The Burden*

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—From a review of *Blade Man*

"This book **blew me away**...a really engaging book."

—Dr. Babus Ahmed, Amazon VINE™ VOICE, reviewing *Not One Among Them Whole*

Constant Reader~

This is one of those stories that pretty much wrote itself. The idea came to me in my exhaustion one night. It sat there, in my brain, worming its way around like a parasite of some sort until I had to write it down after a few weeks.

I'm glad I did. I think it's pretty good and I'm betting you'll think so too. Fair warning though, it's intense. Jesus Mother Mary intense.

And if you like stories of ordinary folks in extraordinary circumstances—intense fiction—pick up my other reads as well.

And now something special...

At the end of this novella, you will find an excerpt of my latest novel, *Not One Among Them Whole*. A group of surgeons struggle amid the chaos and carnage of a battlefield hospital in this epic tale of human grist under the grindstone of the Civil War. A magnificently harrowing trip through the horrors of Gettysburg. Stunningly intense, engaging, heart-breaking—and absolutely fantastic (at least according to many of the reviewers.).

I hope you will stick around to read the preview, and if you like it, buy the novel. It's available in both paperback and as an eBook (Kindle, Nook, Kobo

JUICING OUT

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This novella is a work of fiction designed for the pleasure and enjoyment of you, constant reader. Please don't support book theft in any form.

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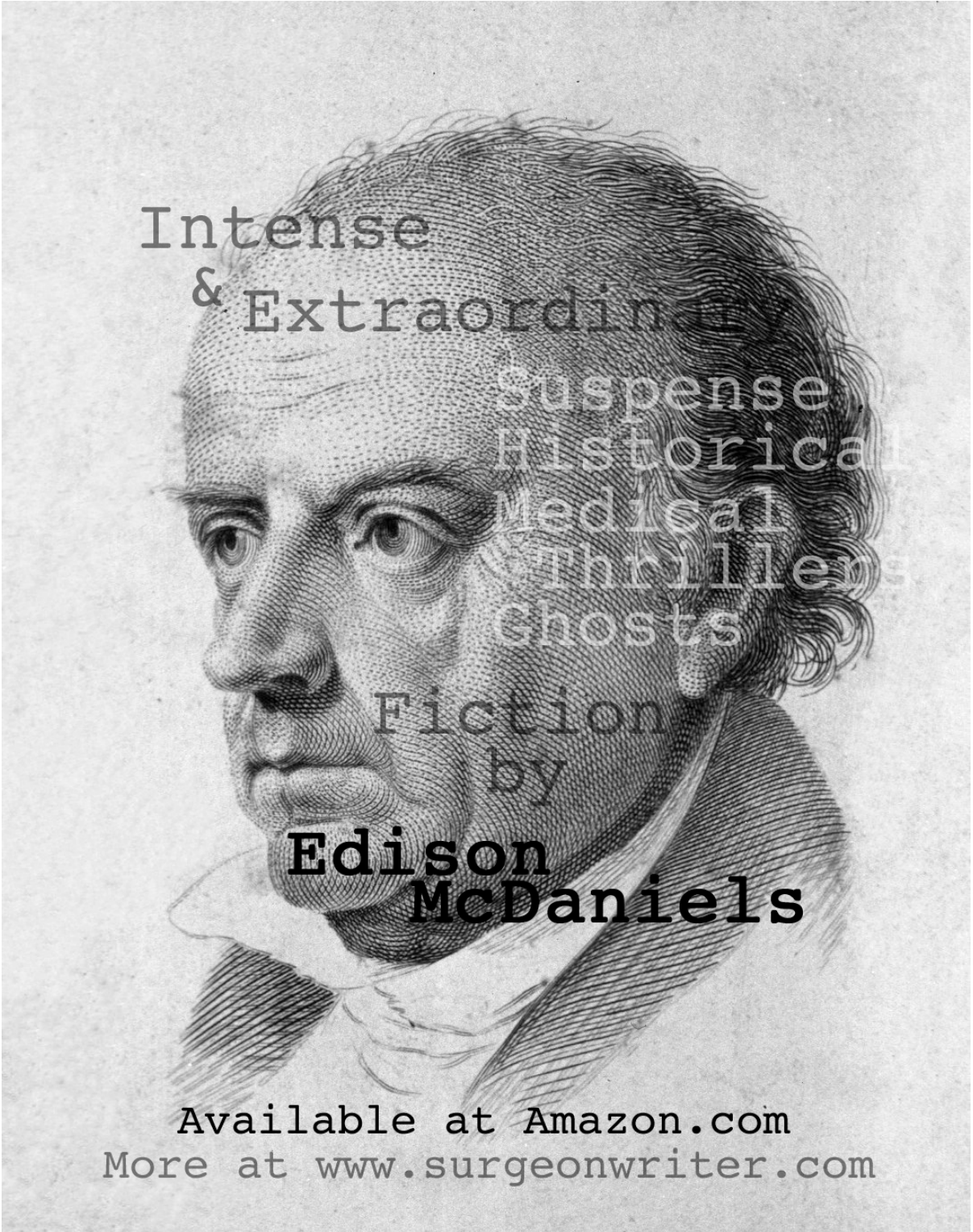
About The Author

Edison McDaniels is a practicing surgeon & wordsmith, who writes short stories, novellas, and novels when he's not incising skin. Read more about him at **www.surgeonwriter.com** and look for his fine & intense works of fiction on Amazon for the Kindle.

His latest novel, *Not One Among Them Whole*, is available for the Kindle and as a trade paperback from Northampton House Press.

Join his fan page on facebook at www.facebook.com/McDaniels.author. He invites you to follow him on twitter as well, @surgeonwriter.

Please tweet a brief review of this short story to **@surgeonwriter!**



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JUICING OUT

The sound was piercing, high pitched, and shrill, but quick and elusive the way a chirp is at once there and not. Irritating too, the midlife equivalent of that old elementary school trick of dragging one's fingernails across a chalkboard. That chirp was a curiously instantaneous sound, lasting, I came to think of it as defining, an instant. And that instant came again (chirp), and again (chirp), and again (chirp). I timed it later—not because I wanted to but because I had no choice—and found it to be exactly thirty seconds. Oh sure, sometimes it seemed shorter, like maybe only fifteen or even ten seconds had elapsed since the last chirp, but then I would watch the second hand of my timex jerk forward and when the counting was done the interval would be those same goddamn thirty seconds. No sir, that lousy smoke detector was never off by so much as a tick.

I guess maybe it was my sanity that was off.

But that all came later. Just then, at o'dark thirty on that lousy morning, all I knew was that that little birdie of a smoke detector was driving me nutso. I had been up for the better part of two days and I should have been sleeping. My body needed it and I certainly wanted it. A half hour before I hadn't even bothered to undress. My butt hit that mattress and I fell back like some sort of boneless waif. I was probably asleep before my head even hit the pillow. But some sounds are designed to be heard no matter what, even through a dead sleep—especially through a dead sleep as it turned out—and that smoke detecting little birdie chirp was chief among them. Once it started up, no power on earth seemed capable of canceling it.

If I'd have had a shotgun I'd have blown that goddamn birdie off the ceiling and out of my life. But I didn't and so began the trouble.

* * *

Six hours before, I had just finished my third crani and seventh operation in thirty-six hours. I crack heads for a living, as in brain surgery, not bouncing. It was already going on eight in the evening and I was looking forward to mashed potatoes and a chicken-fried steak at the Hungry Peddler followed by some quality time with my pillow. My week of call had less than twelve hours left. Better yet, I had a week of vacation to follow, though I hadn't planned much aside from driving over to Minneapolis to see my daughter and her family. I had left that idea open though, maybe I would show up and maybe I wouldn't, so they weren't expecting me at any particular time.

My third crani had been a teenager named Junious Flagg. He should have been in school but was out joy-riding with his buddies instead. He arrived

smelling of whiskey and I later heard the cops found two empty bottles of *Night Train* on the floorboards. I guessed he'd had his head out the window, maybe in his cheap whiskey stupor he'd actually been trying to climb out I imagined, when his buddy spun out on the shoulder of the road and Junious took a stop sign to the face. He'd come in seizing, his lips and fingers hypoxic blue and arms and legs flailing like some version of the horizontal funky chicken. One side of his face was hard to look at, a red pulpy mess. But the far bigger problem for him was the clot I saw pressing his brain inward on the CT. We went to surgery on the spot, without bothering to pass go or collect \$200. Two hours later, after removing a fair portion of his skull and sucking out the clot along with several good sized pieces of wood, I gave his brain only a fair chance of ever allowing him to wake up. His face was at least covered with skin again, though if he lived he wasn't going to be impressed with his new look. I was getting him tucked into the ICU when another call came.

'Another call' turned out to be a major trauma alert to the ER. One of those all hands events, choreographed chaos. The patient hit the door, another young man, and was whisked straight to the trauma bay. He wore international orange and was awake and talking, though what he was saying was anybody's guess. His speech was thick and mostly unintelligible, like he had marbles in his mouth. That wasn't the most of it though. Wrapped around his head was a thick and bloody bandage of a sort I hadn't seen in all my twenty years of practicing neurosurgery. It looked for all the world like an adult diaper.

It was. I confirmed this a short time later in the OR. Just then though, I was trying to figure what had happened and what needed doing to save his life. The rapid beep-beep-beep of the heart monitor filled the room. Somebody hollered "100/60" and I saw a nurse pull a pair of shears from her smock and start cutting his clothes off. It was done fast and was followed quickly by an intern sticking a finger where the sun doesn't shine. "Good tone, no blood," she said to nobody in particular, then went to work sliding a catheter up the shaft of his manhood.

The patient didn't particularly appear to like this, but then again he probably didn't like much of what happened over the next several minutes. A lab tech stuck a needle in his arm and blood dribbled from it onto the floor. An IV was started. His arms and legs flailed and at one point he kicked one of the orderlies holding him down. I stepped in and shined a light in his eyes, which were both reactive, and he squenched them closed in the next instant. He opened them again, seemed to gaze at me with a sort of distant, languid look.

"You got what you need, Sam?" somebody asked me.

"What'd you say happened here?"

"Don't know for sure. He was out in the woods, deer hunting by the looks

of him, and was found on the wrong side of a ridge by his buddies."

"A deer stand diver?" Every year we saw a dozen or more folks who'd fallen out of a deer stand, maybe because it had rotted in the off season, or they had fallen asleep with boredom, or, and this was the grand winner in terms of numbers, because they had mixed guns and alcohol. One year I had a guy who had dropped his shotgun over the side in his beer stupor. It blew the top of his head to smithereens when he peered over the edge just in time to see it striking the ground.

"Not so far as we know."

"The diaper?" I asked.

"His buddies carried him out. Drove him to the local ER I hear. I guess they used what they had."

I thought about asking if they were hunting in diapers, but I let it go. "His head?"

"Nobody knows," he looked at me, asked again, "You got what you need?"

"Yeah, sure. He's combative and we need a look under that diaper."

"We'll get him over to CT as soon as he's tubed."

He was tubed, paralyzed, and in the scanner inside of five minutes. I stood with the other docs looking at the monitor as the machine scanned through that diaper. His head was a small ball in the middle of the wad. As the pictures revealed themselves, there was a collective "holy shit," followed by several loud whistles. To a person they turned to me.

"Anybody think he looks like a deer?" I asked.

Somebody chuckled. The trauma surgeon, Joe Gap was his name, said, "Somebody must've thought he did."

The scan showed several large bullet fragments in the back of his head. His skull had been fractured by the impact and pieces of bone and lead were laced throughout his occipital lobes. Something large and metallic was stuck near the bony prominence at the back of his head. There was no way it hadn't lacerated the transverse sinus, the big mofo as far as veins in the head go. I looked through the leaded glass at the man laying in the CT scanner, at that stupid looking wrap on his head. Did he look paler than he had in the ER? I had a pretty good idea there must have been a shitload of blood spilled in those woods. *Jesus Mother Mary*, I thought, and was suddenly glad I hadn't opted to unwrap that diaper before scanning him. I was shocked they'd gotten him this far alive. This guy owed his life—or the last hour of it anyway—to whichever of

those hunters had a problem holding his bowels so severe he'd opted to wear an adult diaper into the woods. I couldn't believe he hadn't bled to death out in those woods. I couldn't believe he'd arrived here talking. Most of all though, I couldn't see how he was gonna leave here in anything but a body bag. "Shit," I said, "tell the OR we're coming. And tell the blood bank I need a half dozen units of O neg. And tell 'em be quick about it." I turned to Joe. "Can you give me a hand?"

He nodded, "but just remember, I ain't no brain surgeon."

* * *

While they moved my patient down the hall and up the elevator two floors to surgery, I made my way back to the ER. I always try to at least meet the next of kin before operating, especially when the next time I talk with them might be with a priest beside me.

His significant other was in the waiting room I was told, but I found her outside smoking a cigarette. It was cold outside, but you couldn't smoke in the hospital and there was probably nothing she needed more in that instant than a cigarette. That's a truism I've discovered over the years. I watched her through the glass for a moment. She stood beside a pole (in the spring or summer I thought she'd have been leaning against that pole, but not in the dead of winter; that pole would have burned her bare skin). She held a cell phone in the same hand as the cigarette, but she wasn't using it just then. I saw she wasn't wearing a sweater and had her shoulders hunched against the cold. She seemed alone in her misery.

I stepped forward and the doors slid apart. I said "excuse me" and she turned around. She was maybe thirty pounds overweight, the couch potato zone I thought, still a few pounds shy of true obesity with its diabetes, heart disease, and back problems. She had an unflattering ruddy complexion though; not the picture of health. She had the look: she'd been crying and there were rings around her eyes of a sort almost exclusively reserved for those who don't know if a funeral or a hug is in their future. A wad of kleenex was balled in her off hand. She looked decidedly blue collar in a slightly frayed white maid's uniform. A name tag pinned over her left breast, above her heart I guessed, said *Howard Johnson's* on the top line and *Josie* in large letters below it. I held my hand out, I like to touch folks (I read somewhere how it makes the interaction more heartfelt for them), and she stuck the kleenex in her pocket after a moment of hesitation and took my hand in hers.

"Is he..." Her voice had a smoker's phlegmy rattle.

"No," I said quickly, maybe too quickly I thought afterwards, on the way up to the operating room. "But it doesn't look good."

"He gonna make it. Has to, that's all. Has to."

Saying it doesn't make it so I thought but didn't say. "Why don't we go inside."

She took a last drag on the cigarette and stubbed it out under her shoe on the icy sidewalk.

When we were seated in the privacy room, I said, "My name's Sam. I'm a neurosurgeon." I paused. Nobody is ever happy to see a neurosurgeon and the realization can come as quite a shock. "He's hurt real bad."

"Neurasurgeon. That a brain surgeon, right?" Her eyes loomed large before me, but they never actually looked at me. Like she was afraid to make eye contact. Or maybe she was just overwhelmed. Maybe she was used to taking her cues and getting her words from others. Mostly men I thought. I thought too how those eyes had a hard edge to them. One of them had a tinge of blue beneath it, like an old bruise.

"Yes ma'am. Just now I'll be taking him into surgery, the back of his head..." I indicated my own head with my hand, "...it's busted up pretty bad."

"What you think, Dr. Sam? Does most people what have a busted up head make it? Or does they go to ground?"

I had never heard that term before and there must have been a quizzical look on my face.

"That how my grammie used tuh say it. You think he'll go to ground, Dr. Sam?"

"Actually, it's Dr. Vogel, Sam's my first name. May I call you Josie?" I didn't wait for an answer, there wasn't time. "And I don't know if he's going to ground." *But there's a damn good chance of it*, I might have added but didn't.

"He cain't go to ground. Bobby, he drinks some but he ain't no bad guy you know. He hardly ever do me when I don't want it. I know he love me." She almost looked at me then, and I thought *Who gave you that shiner Josie? Did Bobby—your ain't no bad guy man—do that?*

"I ain't never had no one to love me before. I know something about bad guys and he ain't one."

I thought she probably did know something about bad guys. Looking at her, I thought maybe she could write a book about bad guys. I said, "I'll do my best." *But don't expect too much, cause that's a big ol' bullet somebody put in Bobby's head, bad guy or no.*

She bucked up then, and nodded at me. She looked in that moment like

she had seen life at its worst and this wasn't it. She looked like she had faith in me.

* * *

A few minutes later, I was standing in the operating room looking down on Bobby. I knew there was gonna be a bloodletting like nobody's business as soon as I unwrapped that diaper. Normally, I'd have called my partner to assist me on something like this, but there wasn't time. Joe was right in that he wasn't a brain surgeon, but he was a damn good trauma surgeon and wouldn't faint when things turned to stool.

They turned to stool in a hurry.

* * *

Well, gentle reader, thanks for reading. That's the first 3,000 words of JUICING OUT. If you liked what you read, there's another 11,000 words (the entire novella is 14,000 words) for your immediate reading available at Amazon for the Kindle for just \$0.99!

Own it today. Right now. Right this very moment.

And don't forget to check out my other stories, including the novel *Not One Among Them Whole*—A magnificently harrowing trip through the bloody horrors of the battle of Gettysburg. A group of surgeons struggle amid the chaos and carnage of a battlefield hospital in this epic tale of human grist under the grindstone of the American Civil War.

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