

5,241 words.

The Devil Fears Us.

a short story

Friday, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1917

Hell is the final dwelling of our shadows.

Morél Jones did not want Amari Diallo to die. He believed death was never the price to pay a negligent and error-prone system: an argument he persistently made while petitioning for the life of the elderly man. Morél was assertive, and he was sixteen; and he was among those boys in middle adolescence who had grown up hearing the declarations of despairing adults—that he would become a great man someday, that he would set the world on fire, that he would change everything for the better. And he, in part, used those egoistic declarations to fuel the sort of confidence that convinces a child that it is they who must persuade a city, a country, the world, that a person donning the condition of Mr. Amari Diallo—a 64-year-old black man living on death row—ought not, and should not, be killed.

Preventing this death is about intersectionality—was a line in his mental chorus, entertained more readily than video game consoles or cable TV—it's U.S. imperialism meeting U.S. apartheid meeting the U.S. prison industrial complex meeting white hegemony. Dismantle. Dismantle. Dismantle—cause these tired-ass leaders aren't meeting our quotas—MURDERING through a system that's killing the poor. Nobody should want them why would anybody want them. They're God-damn, motherfucking trash! And you can't complain about your bills being too high, or the world being messed up if you won't dismantle—dismantle—

dismantle. Let's tumble it all down like MMA fighters—powerful like Bruce Lee—or The Rock—Ho-l-y!—Holyfield!!

"Because they are killing our people," Morél said, not hearing the loud hum coming from the metro rail escalators. "Mr. Diallo is another black man who will die at the hands of anti-black racism—not to mention that there is so much negligence in our judicial system that innocent people are dying every day. Just think about it...if there are all those mistakes happening each day in the courtrooms, how can we even have a death row?"

"Soooo...do you want my signature?" said the person wearing a polka dot shower cap and dark-blue high-heels.

Morél lowered his chin as his dreadlocks hung loose—wincing his green eyes, holding for the person light feelings of disgust, thinking he had convinced a pococurante of nothing except signing his sheet of paper, which had been given back to him with stomping heels, rolling eyes, and teeth sucked more sharply than a premeditated slap.

"Boy! Boy! Boy!" said a person standing up from the corner of the escalator, where the circular beams were glistening above the concrete ground.

"You need to stop wrappin us up! Ain't you a millennial? You betta start telling it to Lucifer the way Harry told Voldy! Say to Lucy, 'You don't know love! You ain't got no friends! And I feel sorry for you!'"

"Ridiculous!!!" said the person as they flung their arms, stumbling back down to the escalator's light, as Morél held the trace of fumes laced within the person's scent—keeping silent, feeling belittled, wondering if he truly convinced anyone of anything, canvassing up and down the June-time streets of Petworth in his neon, People for Justice t-shirt, pronouncing the facts-of-things with sweat in his eyes, and sweat in his hair, with no crowds clustering around his wooden clip-board or his social media postings. He felt he was not making an impact—the evidence: Mr. Diallo was still on death row.

He had gone to the many townhouses and convenience stores lining the streets feeding Georgia Avenue, collecting signatures and spreading word about Mr. Diallo. Morél was an activist among other activists in the People for Justice campaign who had been cycling up and down Georgia Avenue that Wednesday, canvassing at the end of Bible studies and school days, pasting fliers and abolitionist art on the scaffolding of gentrifying complexes and on the murky glass panes of bus stops and gas stations.

"Morél, you're doing a top-notch job," said Susan as she dismounted her bike, reflecting the evening light off its many customizations. There was a quote from Emerson, Change We Need, and the title, Lead Organizer, engraved on the bike's poles and bars; the quote read: "To be yourself in a world that is

constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."

"Thanks," Morél said. "But what's the point when nobody gives a shit about what we're doing."

"Don't worry too much about that," Susan said while tying her hair into a bun. "We're working for the people, and in the end they'll see why the work is critical."

"I'm not so sure I can see that happening," said Morél, thinking of a note where his friends had hurt him.

"Morél, there is change happening all around us—most of which we humans are totally unaware of—but I hear you...and I think you've worked really hard today; go home," said Susan with a grin, "before your mom gets mad about your missing dinner again."

Morél nodded, and rode away on his bicycle, many miles north on Georgia Avenue—all the way through Petworth—all the way through uptown by an old Safeway, and the shops at Takoma, and a strip of businesses black-run and black-owned. Straight, straight ahead, he was pedaling fast, as a mosquito hummed near his left ear, and he began brushing it away—though Mrs. Albuquerque, his elderly neighbor who had been watering her flowers, thought he was waving at her; and she smiled anyway when she waved and Morél gave no response, returning to her red roses and adjusting her large sun hat, as Morél biked past a few

trees and garden gnomes, then stopped at the steps of his parents' old, Victorian house where a bird had been chirping with sin and infirmity.

"I've told you about coming home this late Morél Jones," Laura Jones said once the front door's screen snapped shut. "And telling you once should always be enough."

"I was just doing extra-curricular stuff," said Morél as he parked his bike by the front door and headed for the kitchen.

"You mean trying to free a criminal from prison."

"Don't call him that."

"Excuse me," Laura Jones said while lifting her egg-shaped chin and moving towards the one called her son.

Morél rolled his eyes as he faced the oak-wood floors.

"Don't you dare roll your eyes at me," Laura said, slapping together her manicured hands.

"I apologize for my tone and actions."

"I accept it," Laura said. "Now sit for dinner."

"What are we having?"

"Whatever I made. Come to think of it, I've slaved over this stove all day; I should put you to good use. Go get your father from the living room. Tell him it's time for dinner."

Morél rolled his eyes and walked out of the kitchen through its finely ornamented door, and made a small right into the dimly lit living room where he saw his dad sitting on the

cashmere sofa keeping his eyes fixed on the television set. Morél told him it was time to eat, but his dad paid him no mind. Morél told him once more, and Donny Jones simply raised the volume using the remote in his hand, and leaned more closely towards the flat-screen TV so that his collard white shirt turned blue, then red, then white again.

"He's not coming mom," Morél said from the living room.

"Donny, it's time for supper!" Turn that television off!"

There was no reply still, though the volume level increased, and Morél and Laura Jones could now hear the voice of a news anchor.

"The orange envelopes have made their way to over 10 million American households according to a representative from the FBI. In them—a complete copy of the addressee's National Security Agency record and a ransom note. The cyberterrorists behind these attacks demand an average of \$750,000 per note to keep the recipient's NSA record sealed. Local law enforcement agencies have advised the public not to transfer any funds, though many non-compliant recipients of these envelopes have had their NSA files publicly released on social media, the black internet, and on pirate radio..."

"What is happening with the world!" said Donny Jones.

"I told you to stop watching TMZ."

"Woman this is ABC News World Report!"



There was a quiet tension in the room, and Morél wanted a reassuring phrase, a sentence as plain as—it'll all be fine—to break it.

"Let's not listen to all this silliness," said Laura Jones. "I made chicken pot pie tonight, and I can almost guarantee that the both of you will love the special cream I put in it."

The three of them could smell the scent of thyme coming in from the kitchen, and left the living room to begin sitting around the oval dining table so as to eat their pot pies. They remained silent when they began eating, with Morél cutting through the thick layer of crust, nursing a thought which he believed would break the tension in the room and would also break a few weapons in the arsenal of the world's patriarchy.

"How about tomorrow I make us lasagna?" said Morél, smiling at his dad.

"Not in my kitchen you won't!" Laura Jones said before flashing a glance to her husband.

"Why not?"

"Because it's my kitchen and my ingredients and my rule. You just worry about getting yourself here on time," Laura said before giving to Donny Jones a conniving stare.

"That's right..." Donny said. "Matta fact, what you need to start doing is stop acting like a little girl and start hangin around your got damn school friends again."

Morél froze in his shame—then left the dining table, not finishing the pot pie, not thinking of all the ways he wanted the world to be free, not seeing his parents drink their half-empty cups of coffee.

He moved along the wooden staircase and made a left turn to his bedroom door. He opened it, and saw the green light of his screensaver illuminating the four corners of his dark room. His Bob Marley poster glowed as if ready to scream peacetime lyrics onto the bedroom floor, and his portrait of the African continent sat more expectantly than his Xbox console or his television set. Morél took off his People for Justice t-shirt and his slim-fit pants, and put on a pair of gym shorts and a cotton T. And before he went to sleep, he clicked open his laptop and sent an email to Susan promising to canvas his entire neighborhood “until everyone was down to free Diallo.”

#

“he’s a Fucking bitCH.”

I’ll stay silent. Morél don’t speak.

“Naaah man, He’s a fucking faGGot!”

I’ll stay quiet... keep quiet Morél... keep quiet!

“Bitch aSS, sorry ass niGGa.”

“Because I don’t want to watch porn with you?” I said.

“Look, he even soUnds retarded!—acting like he’s got a moafuckin’ diCk up his ass.”

"Again, are we to believe that the age designations that pornographic websites display are credible?"

"Shut the fuck up!! YOU CUM SIPPIN' NIGGER-BITCH!!!!"

"Certainly that would be naïve." I said. "It would also be naïve to deny the reality that many in the sex industry entered as vulnerable children, if not, vulnerable teenagers like us."

But now they are laughing at me. They are mocking me; and my chest feel tight and my heart keep pounding... But if you continue speaking baby—and meet yourself exactly where you're at—to keep moving forward, by focusing on yourself—honey they've got to understand.

"How can a government that kills its own citizens daily... many of which are children... how can it actually be entrusted with protecting every child from sexual predation?"

"BHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!" "BHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!"

"BHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!" "BHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!"

"BHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!" "BHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!"

"BHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!" "BHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!!!"

"He's a BITCH!!! A FUCKING PTERODACTYL BITCH!!!! GET THE FUCK OUTTA HERR—PAID UP! PAID UP! KUNTA-BITCH—HA!"

#

Morél woke up remembering his promise—though not his dream. The former had possessed him more powerfully than the soporific grip of apathy; and he began doing what he had been

taught to do to care for his well-being—flossing, brushing his teeth, taking a shower, saying a prayer—and he did not eat any of the waffles his mom had placed on the oval dining table. He rushed out of the front door and locked it with a key and rushed to the Victorian house sitting across the street, a few houses down from that of his parents. Morél climbed onto the front stairs of its purple porch, and knocked on the door as politely as he could; but nobody responded. So, he began knocking again, over and again, growing concerned that something had happened to 80-year-old Mrs. Albuquerque: the person who had gifted him with an eagle's feather, and who had made him Malcolm X at the public library's Black History Month program.

"Is anyone home?" Morél called out, "Are you there Mrs. Albuquerque? Are you there Mrs. Albuquerque!"

Morél continued knocking without hearing a response, and was beginning to panic, until he saw the mailperson walking onto the porch and placing Mrs. Albuquerque's mail into an empty mailbox, then slipping away, without saying a word, listening to their music—appearing as calm as the blue of their navy uniform. It was then Morél realized that if Mrs. Albuquerque's mailbox had been empty, she could not have been away from her house for too long and was most likely not in any grave danger. And so he left the purple porch, carrying some ease of mind, and saw the name G. Albuquerque etched on the purple mailbox before

stepping onto the lawn, and passing a pink house, and knocking on every residential door he came upon, the odd side first—1821, 1823, 1825...—then the evens.

"I'd...LOVE...to sign your petition!" said the woman from 1822.

"Young man shouldn't you be at school?" said the person from 1824.

But Morél did not answer; not with the slightest word.

"That Diallo is a no-good criminal," continued the person from 1824, "and you's a damn fool, walkin around this here neighborhood tryna to get him freed."

"And what exactly are you attempting to do," said the person from 1828.

"I want to put an end to the oppression of Mr. Amari Diallo," Morél said.

"I see," said the person from 1828. "And this oppression, is it evil?"

"What do you mean—is oppression evil?!"

"I see...And you...are you evil?"

"How can I be evil if I'm fighting oppression," said Morél widening his eyes.

"I see," the person said. "So, I suppose you'd say that you're good?"

"Yes, yes I'm good."

"I see..."

"Fuck you," Morél told the person from 1828 as he turned from their door and began walking away.

It was time for a break Morél knew; if Susan were here, she would say it was time for a break. There was a coffee shop nearby, and Morél had walked the seven blocks to come to its front door, while thinking of all the ways he had come to hate his neighborhood, and his society, and the world for being as stupid as it was.

"Fucking retarded ass bullshit," he spat under his breath, then realized quickly that he should not have used the word retarded.

He entered the coffee shop and ordered an espresso. He paid the cashier, then put his clipboard on the table and put his book-bag by his seat, and sat down to drink his coffee—listening to Kendrick through his Android and earbuds.

"Hello young man," he heard from the right side of the space behind him. Morél turned in his seat, and saw a bright, elderly man smiling with laughter in his eyes and a gray newsboy cap in his hands.

"Hi," Morél said.

"There aren't any more seats left in this shop except the one next to you. May I sit at it?"

"Sure," Morél said, regretting it the moment he had said it, sensing that the elderly man was in the mood for conversation.

"My name is Marvin," the man said as he sat down. "What's yours?"

"I'm Morél."

"Well it's nice to meet you Morél."

Morél kept silent, and took a sip of his espresso.

"You mighta heard this already Morél, but it is a mighty fine thing to see an activist come out so young. What are you petitioning?"

Morél stopped his sipping, and put the espresso cup down.

"Have you heard of Mr. Amari Diallo?" Morél asked.

"No, I don't believe I have," Marvin said.

"Well I'll tell you...Mr. Diallo was a painter in Detroit who was falsely accused of killing a police officer. He's been on death row since the '80s. There's been so much evidence that's come out to vindicate his name, but the system keeps failing to exonerate him. And they're going to kill him in under nine months if something isn't done."

"Well that's a mighty terrible thing...to kill a man, that's a terrible, terrible thing."

"Well yeah and to have a legal system that disproportionately targets black people."

"Now that's mighty terrible too," said Marvin.

Morél sat for a moment and pondered on the conversation within the silence that had peacefully emerged.

"How did you know I was an activist?"

"Well I do live in this here community. I'm over at 1864, and I've seen you each day making your way out and knocking on doors from sunrise to sunset. Sometimes I wonder if you ever go to school."

"Not that it's any of your business, but I'm a high school junior with a half-day schedule; and I use my free time as I please."

"I understand it. I even understand why you're getting short with me. If you'd like me to leave, I can do that."

Morél said nothing back to the man, but sipped on his coffee and watched the elderly man put down his gray cap—which carried a pink badge adorned with the words: VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST MAN-MADE WARS—all written in red—as he sat hearing the man drinking soft gulps of his cinnamon-flavored coffee.

#

Morél entered his parents' house late that afternoon, hearing the buzz of shredding coming in from the living room. The bright light from the television screen was now striking his face as he saw orange-colored paper being sliced into dozens of strands. He saw a look of panic, trapped, in his dad's pale-



green eyes, and thought somehow he knew from where it came— until Donny Jones barked, “Boy! Why ain’t you in school somewhere!”

The orange envelopes had come into his neighborhood; but Morél had not known it. Day after day heads-of-households would receive them, and would then move to dispose each orange file; though more and more continued arriving as though they had been sent by magic owls slipping them through mailbox slits and open doors, and wrapping them between newly published magazines and coupon books and ads from nearby pizzerias. The household heads tried disposing them still, tucking them under the white of other envelopes, then tucking the whole bundle into the pockets of their bathrobes while waving “Good morning” to their neighbors waving back. And when Morél’s parents received theirs—his dad did not bother reading them, but shredded them all with the envelopes still sealed, while his mom read hers thoroughly before locking them inside a luxury safe, and deciding she would begin cooking larger meals to rid her mind of those secrets she believed no one would ever know.

On a Thursday evening, the Jones family ate as if it were the day to give thanks. Laura Jones had glazed a ham, had mashed potatoes, had fried okra, alongside other dishes, in preparation for what was to be a perfect supper. And while eating, she said nothing as she looked past her husband and son, as she played

silently with her seasoned rice while drinking sips of wine. Laura was the one who had gathered the mail six mornings ago, before giving her husband a dirty look and a roll of her eyes while handing him his orange envelopes; and she could not bear telling him now that she had received envelopes of her own. So she ate without looking at him, until she heard Morél lightly cough in summoning the attention of the settled dining room.

"What is it Morél?" Laura asked.

"I've got something I have to tell you."

"What you gotta say now Morél," Donny said.

Morél said nothing as he slid the mandarin-colored envelope onto the oval dining table.

"WHERE DID THAT COME FROM!" said Mrs. Jones.

"I got it at the People for Justice mailbox..."

"Did anyone see it!" Laura said.

"N-no no; no one saw it."

"I knew you shoulda neva hung around those good-for-nothing, blood sucking, weed smoking hippies! God damn it Morél!"

"Your father is right!" Laura said. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself! We take you to church every Sunday for you to abide in the Lord and this...THIS...is what you've come to show us!"

"Boy you too young to have a government record," Donny said, wiping his face with both of his palms. And now your future is all fucked up—cause best believe we ain't got the money to negotiate with no cyberterrorists! So now what?? You betta tell me boy...WHAT KIND OF MOTHAFUCKIN' MAN YOU GON GROW UP TO BE?"

And with tears tumbling from out of his eyes, Morél grabbed the unsealed envelope, and ran to his room—wearing the gray of April's clouds—not hearing his dad yelling, "We don't negotiate with terrorists Laura! We don't negotiate with dem fools!" as he tore down his posters and ripped apart his portraits, and nearly threw his video game console through the glass of his television screen, but opened, with shaking hands, the seal of the envelope, reading again what had been written.

#

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Morél Nehemiah Jones</u>
<u>Social Security:</u>	<u>XXX-XX-5876</u>
<u>Pertinent Files:</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>Consumption of illicit drugs and substances</u></li> <li>2. <u>Viewing child pornography</u></li> <li>3. <u>Texting pornographic photos via mobile app</u></li> </ol>

#

Wire \$10,700 to account number: 889749491117623.

If the above amount is not sent within 30 days, the files tying you to these activities will be made public.

#

Amount non-negotiable.

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Then he took from his pocket, the note he had been carrying from his friends, and began re-reading, then re-reading it again.

#

Morel your a fuckin bitch ass nigga. You don't get lit. You don't turn up. And you damn sure ain't meeting your titty-ass-pussy quotas.

#

We voted you off the mothafuckin island bitch.

#

Sorry, not sorry

#

— Paid Up

#

He wept, and thought of ways to end it all: to roll himself onto the ground of moving traffic and have cars and trucks crush him dead—to take the butcher's knife sitting in the kitchen and slice it across the protrusions now thumping in his wrists—to

take the pills, the many pills, waiting in the cabinet—  
 consuming them, then slipping away to a place where the  
 firestorms swirling in his head would stop. His chest began  
 burning. He could not breathe with the lodgings in his throat.  
 Nobody would ever want him, he thought, “Nobody! Nobody!” he  
 screamed within a whisper “But you are a king,” he began  
 remembering; it was Mrs. Albuquerque’s voice that was saying it.  
And when you know truly the love which carries us Morél, you  
will call yourself ‘king’, amongst others.

“Bullshit.” he whispered as he began rising up—running out  
 of his room then out of his parents’ house to go away—and away—  
 and away to that place where everybody is nobody: and shadows  
 are transparent embers: where one is a most prodigal child: and  
 everything is nothing; and as he was running along the sidewalk,  
 beneath the street lamps and the glaring sirens, he fell with  
 his knees now open, gushing red like tombs keeping bloodletters;  
 and he hated the pain since it could not end his life, and  
 prayed for it to seep into his heart or his brain to create  
 complications; and he saw that there were people now standing  
 above him, and prayed for them to use their guns to shoot him  
 dead—then saw too a grey cap which he had seen from before, and  
 watched it being clutched by the power of dark hands.

“Officers the child is on his way Home,” said the man with  
 the cap.

"So you know him?" the first officer said.

"It is what I said. The child is on his way Home, and I am taking him with me."

"Is he your grandson sir?" said the other officer.

"Right now, he is my responsibility," the man said.

"Where do you live sir?"

"I'm over at 1864."

There was a silence.

"Now that we are done with all these questions, I'm taking this child who is bleeding, and wounded, and in pain, into our house."

"We'll help you carry him over," said the first officer.

"That would be lovely," said the man.

The officers lifted Morél to his feet, and asked if he was okay as they each grabbed one arm and one leg and carried him, in a sitting position, towards the elderly man's house. And when they had arrived, the other officer became reassured when they saw Marvin opening his Victorian house with a gold-plated key, and saw photos of the elderly man hanging upon the finely painted walls, framed with the kind of oak which understood refinement and wealth. And Morél did not say anything—not even a gasp to release the pressure from the pain of moving, or the pain that emerged once the elderly man began applying first aid. He had been lying on the couch, and soon he was watching the

elderly man wish the officers a fair night while closing the front door whose pet flap was worn and gray. Then he saw the man go out of view as he entered his kitchen and began making sounds bright from mixing and clinking. Within a moment, Morél was rising to the smell of freshly brewed coffee.

"I'm grateful to see you sitting up Morél. I take it you're feeling better."

"You're the one I met, from before."

"Indeed I am. I'm brewing decaf for the pair of us—do you take cream with yours?"

Morél did not answer, but looked with melancholy near Marvin's gray eyes.

"You don't...want me...in your; house," Morél said, choking through his words.

"And why would that be," Marvin said—moving towards Morél with a mug.

"Because I'm a terrible person," Morél said, while wiping long tears from his eyes.

"Child, what creature hasn't ever felt like they've been terrible? And what creature hasn't ever done terrible things? Now I'm suspecting some things, and if I'm suspecting right you probably got a few of those letters."

Jolts of energy flew out of Morél's chest, and his stomach, and his steadying eyes, as he looked to the floor of Marvin's

house growing fearful, convinced that Marvin knew of all the things written of him: all the ways he had done wrong.

"Can I ask you a question sweet child?"

Morél waited within the space of an entire minute before slowly nodding his head.

"Which is greater—the devil's shenanigans or the mercy of God?"

"I don't know," Morél said.

"I think deep down you do. I heard you listening to our music that other day in the coffee shop. Do you know who said, 'Only God can judge me?' And I see you with your folks each Sunday going to Takoma Christian Church. Don't they preach to y'all up in there? Sweet child, the only person worthy of judging you was murdered by our judgmental ways; and even he said he didn't come to condemn, but to save. So what's really good," Marvin said, before taking a sip of coffee.

"I hate my life," Morél said as he looked past Marvin's gaze. "I hate my life! I hate my life!"

"Sweet child," Marvin said, looking through the black of Morél's eyes, "When we each move on from this here nonsense, and recognize that we will one day shine more brightly than the sun; we will understand—fully—that the devil fears us."

Morél kept silent and, for the first time that night, felt compelled to take a sip of coffee. He thought through Marvin's



words—wanting to tell him more about Diallo, then wanting to tell him more about his affairs with the crew: Paid Up—but he watched as Marvin walked over to the nook in his kitchen to pick up another mug and a square piece of paper.

“If you want Morél, you can read what was in my letter. I ain’t got no problem with no sinner knowing my sins, since in the end we’re dealing with the residues of Lucifer’s bullshit.”

Morél paused and felt curiosity rising within him. He accepted the full cup of coffee and the piece of paper, and saw all the ways the government had tracked Marvin’s life: all the ways the terrorists wanted him to feel ashamed. He read that Marvin had been arrested many times, had driven drunk, had committed war crimes, had stolen money with an accomplice: Mrs. Genevieve Grace Albuquerque; and he thought of his mom and dad and knew for certain that they had envelopes too, and knew for certain that Susan had an envelope, and that Mr. Diallo had an envelope, and that the people choosing to execute Mr. Diallo each had envelopes of their own.

“And that’s just what the government has recorded,” Marvin said with a light frown, “What about all those things that have been on my mind, or that have lived within my heart...before I came to know the name of my own shadow?”

Marvin saw Morél looking through the living room window.

"You... ain't it just so?" Marvin said, "Since you are my tail and my self is my head. And how could I understand this without you...that if it's not in my control, it's not my concern—since with heavenly exception, I am the worst sinner that I know."

Then looking through Morél, Marvin said, "Never expect life from the one who is truly dead. Peace...be unto you."

And Morél was looking at Marvin when he heard a sound coming from the front door's flap, and picked up on a stench as he saw a small, black cat prancing into the living room.

"You see it now...don't you beloved child. If I told you to show me where the birds are, where would you point to? The sky ain't it? You wouldn't think to consider the one resting in Mrs. Albuquerque's mouth."

Morél saw the dead bird falling from Mrs. Albuquerque's grip, before she stretched her arms and began meowing softly towards the hearing of Morél.

"Now if I told you to show me, where the people are. Where would you say? The supermarket? The city? The farm? The government?"

"I couldn't say," Morél said as he smiled at the smiling cat, "But I can tell you this much—I'm not afraid to ask you for a second cup of coffee."

Morél chuckled, and handed Marvin his empty mug as he watched him whisking away—towards the half-full pot of coffee, brewing silently, silently, near the kitchen's stove.

The End