

end concurred, but cautioned the crime lord that all the corpses hadn't been identified.

"How about the Roach? Have you found him? Anything? His hat, his coat, his mask? No? Okay, keep lookin'. Yeah, you'd better get back with the other coppers 'er else they might start puttin' two and two together. Ya' earned this month's pay-off, buddy-boy!"

Nitty hung up the phone with a malicious grin on his face. Nobody left alive. That included the Roach. Regardless how good a good guy the Roach was, even he couldn't have eluded that carnage.

Frank walked back toward his bedroom, still smiling, still thinking about the Roach. Funny, he suddenly thought, the floor hadn't been wet when he answered the phone. Nor had the window been open. With the icy finger of dread playing along his spine, Nitty spun about. There, in the room's densest shadows, a cigarette glowed.

"Good evening, Frank," the grave voice said.

Nitty's mouth was glued shut by fear.

"I didn't want to disturb your phone conversation so I let myself in. One of your police stoolies? Did he tell you what happened up around the park? Did he tell you that I'm dead?"

"I guess this is where I buy it," Nitty said, his voice finally unthawing.

"No, Frank," the Roach began, "this isn't where you buy it. You know your role in this world of ours, and I know mine. Plus, we both know each other's. With the right relationship—the proper degree of understanding and respect—you're right where I want you to be. I don't want you dead. Not yet. But this weekend has at least shown both of us that when I do want you six feet under, there's nothing you can do to stop me. I'll be in touch."

Suddenly, the cigarette went out and the Roach was gone.

Through the Window

by J. Keith Graybill

Through the window
 a bird devastates bread crumbs
 by peck, peck, peck.
 Winds of woosh and trees of creaks
 prevail.
 Snow falls and falls
 and keeps falling,
 until all is covered.

Within,
 a spider spins a silent web,
 near the portrait of an idle dance.
 Silence speaks;
 accompanying the onlooking aged
 waiting to be covered.