# Afternoon Discoveries: November 4, 2026

Mystery, Thriller, Crime, Horror, & Dark Fiction

AMONG THE LETTERS
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## Mystery, Thriller, Crime, Horror, & Dark Fiction

*An actress finds a clay statue of her dead dog on her doorstep, and a woman meets an intruder who claims to mean her no harm. A pantry monster leaves a trail of black slime, and a detective digs a shallow grave under an Iowa moon. Today's stories come from The Dark, Mystery Tribune, Nightmare, PseudoPod, a Toronto magazine, and Kaleidotrope. The back shelf holds*

*occult detectives, a haunted hotel night, and three classics of dread. Each piece asks what waits once the lights go out.*

*All links in today's edition were checked against the linked publication, magazine, or publisher page on November 4, 2026.*

# Featured Discovery

## Last Season - R.L. Summerling

Lisa starred in a hit series as Tessa, and strangers still call her by that name on the street. Fans adore the hospital carpark scene and mock her for aging, while she screenshots praise and refuses new auditions. Then a delivery arrives, a delicate clay statue with "Sally" etched underneath, the name of the childhood dog she once used for a tearful take. R.L. Summerling's story in The Dark turns fame into something that watches from the kitchen counter. The chill grows with every notification.

Read "Last Season" at The Dark

# The Discovery Desk

## Just in Time - Kat Hausler

Diane is still awake when a bulky shadow blocks her hallway light and hisses that she should not worry. She runs for the cordless phone, but he bars the front door until her husband's key turns and the struggle begins. Locked in the bedroom, she hears a thud, then silence, then her husband saying he scared the man off. Kat Hausler's domestic noir at Mystery Tribune keeps tightening the gap between rescue and threat. A few minutes either way would have changed everything.

Read "Just in Time" at Mystery Tribune

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## The Pantry - Rick McQuiston

Ryan watches an amorphous black mass land on his patio with a wet thud, pustules shining like motor oil. Hunger drives him to the kitchen anyway, and when he wakes the creature is gone, leaving a pencil-thin trail of slime that zigzags straight for the doorwall. Rick McQuiston's story in Toronto's The Freak! turns a quiet house into a hunting ground. The pantry becomes the last place you want to open after dark. Appetite and dread share the same hallway.

Read "The Pantry" at The Freak!

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## The Taker - Mari Ness

Most people give her a single eye, which she accepts with a quiet warning they do not understand. Clever visitors offer a hand or a kidney, and she questions them carefully before taking more. A few give her everything, and she begins with the spinal cord while their screams become the meal. Mari Ness's Nightmare flash is brief, cold, and exact about bargains that only go one way. Hospitality here is the first cut.

Read “The Taker” at Nightmare Magazine

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### The Detective and the Owl - David Bart

Under a dull Iowa moon the narrator scrapes at a shallow grave beside the night-blackened Missouri, hoping the pale face in the dirt is not Isla. She had been his client, then his lover, then everything, until she smiled over her shoulder and vanished. An email arrives with a taunt about sins coming home to roost. David Bart’s Mystery Tribune flash packs a private eye’s dread into a few hard pages. Digging only confirms what he already feared.

Read “The Detective and the Owl” at Mystery Tribune

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*Thank you for spending some time with this afternoon’s edition. Below this point are six more stories of horror, mystery, and crime, three pieces of criticism and craft, and three special recommendations from the back shelf.*

*Special Recommendations can be found near the bottom of the article.*

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## More From the Discovery Desk

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### The Grinning Woman - Michael Kelly

As a boy, Lee hid under the covers from a grinning woman his father said came from the oceans and lakes. Years later he arrives at the family

cottage to meet Kate, another setup from parents still hoping for grandchildren. After dinner his father takes him to the lake with a six-pack, and the dark presses at the windows. Michael Kelly's tale in The Dark lets childhood night terrors walk back into adult life. The grin never left the corner of the room.

Read "The Grinning Woman" at The Dark

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## Weather Report - Abe Margel

In Lillooet, northern British Columbia, eight days of November rain keep a husband home while his wife and twin boys visit France. Her praise of Mediterranean ease lands as a rebuke of their Rockies bargain, and an old argument about cafés and community flares again. Abe Margel's Mystery Tribune crime story treats a marriage like a forecast that can still go wrong. Thunder rolls while he drinks Riesling and tries to sleep. Weather is the least of what is building.

Read "Weather Report" at Mystery Tribune

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## Idris - Ilya Wood

Nightfall finds the narrator and Idris about to rest after a cool evening on the balcony. Idris vanishes toward the kitchen, then stands vacant before a new sculpture whose agonizing expression soon claims his face. A pop, a twist, a snap, and the friend is gone before a word can help. Ilya Wood's story in Toronto's The Freak! makes art into a predator that finishes what it depicts. The balcony doors close too late to keep anyone safe.

Read "Idris" at The Freak!

## The Ghost of a Flea - Orrin Grey

Robert and Luke are alone in Parmenter Hall for winter break, already tired of each other, when Robert describes Blake's tiny painting of a monstrous flea-ghost. Talk of crowded spirit worlds turns intimate, then cold, as something watches from the snowy quad. Orrin Grey's PseudoPod story gives the full text alongside the audio. Desire, Blake's murderer-faced spirit, and an unreliable morning after share one dark room. The tree across the courtyard may not be a tree.

Read "The Ghost of a Flea" at PseudoPod

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## Soul Food - Rob Gillham

The Undertaker dreams of pitiless heat, riverbank laundry, and jars with lids shaped like men, baboons, and dogs. Dawn brings a craving sharper than hunger, and he harnesses Rasputin for another cart ride past yellow brick houses and a glass shop that offends him. Rob Gillham's Kaleidotrope tale follows a ritual worker stranded in a damp later age. Routine keeps him moving while something older waits under the cellar door. Breakfast is never only breakfast.

Read "Soul Food" at Kaleidotrope

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## An Unavoidable Consequence of . . . - Kurt Fawver

A school parking-lot blast flings a father into a hedge and tears off his hand, leaving his question unanswered. Later the narrator's wife Erin reports a child dead, and his first word is only "Who," hoping the name is not their son Malcolm's. Kurt Fawver's Nightmare story tracks parental dread through rumour, social media, and midnight checks on a sleeping

child. Accidents keep arriving with no clear why. Safety starts to feel like a temporary rumour.

Read “An Unavoidable Consequence of . . .” at Nightmare Magazine

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# Beyond the First Shelf

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## A Brief History of Occult Detectives - Richie Narvaez

Richie Narvaez traces sleuths who work where crime meets the supernatural, from Judge Bao and King Vikrama to Le Fanu’s Hesselius, Hodgson’s Carnacki, and Sheila Crerar. He shows how reason never fully banished ghosts from the detective story. The CrimeReads essay is a map of trenchcoats, brimstone, and psychic adverts for uncanny cases. It suits anyone who wants the lineage behind the occult whodunit. The reading list alone is worth the stop.

Read “A Brief History of Occult Detectives” at CrimeReads

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## Feature Interview: Michael Wehunt - Erik Grove

Erik Grove talks with Michael Wehunt about novels built on lost memory, the fear of cutting a bleak draft, and learning to write a book on someone else’s deadline. Wehunt describes moving from short fiction into contracted novel work without losing care for each word.

Nightmare's feature interview stays practical about craft under pressure. Writers of quiet horror will find clear talk about structure and salvage. The conversation trusts the work more than the myth.

Read "Feature Interview: Michael Wehunt" at Nightmare Magazine

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## A Writer's Night at America's Most Haunted Hotel - Michel Stone

On a book-tour stop at Arkansas's Crescent Hotel, Michel Stone skips the elevator, overhears a ghost-tour tale of a secret pregnancy, and later feels a cat hop onto the bed in the dark. Nothing is there when the lamp returns, yet morning research names Morris, the hotel's orange tabby ghost. Her CrimeReads essay keeps the fright light and personal, with festival nerves and parental texts beside old floorboards. Belief stays optional, but the shiver does not.

Read "A Writer's Night at America's Most Haunted Hotel" at CrimeReads

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# Special Recommendations

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## The Horla - Guy de Maupassant

A narrator in nineteenth-century France grows sure an invisible being drinks his water, rides his thoughts, and steals his will. Letters and diary entries chart the slide from unease into certainty that something shares

his rooms at night. Maupassant's classic of psychological horror still feels modern in its mounting proof and spiraling fear. Wikisource carries the full text free for anyone to read. Open it when you want dread without a visible monster in the frame.

Read "The Horla" at Wikisource

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## The Upper Berth - F. Marion Crawford

On a steamship crossing, a traveler takes a cabin whose upper berth has a bad reputation among the crew. Night after night something wet and forceful seems to share the space above him while he tries to sleep. Crawford builds the fear from portholes, damp air, and stubborn curiosity that will not leave well enough alone. The Wikisource text is the complete late-Victorian sea ghost story. It remains a model of the locked cabin that will not stay empty.

Read "The Upper Berth" at Wikisource

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## The Judge's House - Bram Stoker

A student takes cheap lodgings in a judge's old house to finish his work in unbroken quiet. Rats fill the walls, a great chair dominates the room, and the town's warnings begin to sound practical rather than quaint. Stoker's tale of judicial haunting is freely available on Wikisource for a long evening read. It pairs well with any modern story about rooms that keep their verdicts. The silence between the scurrying is the worst part.

Read "The Judge's House" at Wikisource

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Thank you for spending part of your day among the letters with us.

*Many of today's pieces turn on what arrives after dark. A statue waits on a counter, slime finds a pantry, and a flea-ghost walks out of Blake. Others follow marriages under pressure and detectives who dig too late. Horror and mystery give shape to fears we rarely name. We hope these stories keep you good company this Wednesday afternoon.*

*I hope one of today's pieces gives you somewhere worth staying for a while.*

*Take care!*