

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark blazer over a light blue shirt and a dark vest, sits at a wooden desk. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. In front of him is a vintage black typewriter with a sheet of white paper inserted. The background is a dark wooden bookshelf filled with books and various objects, including a camera and a lamp. The overall atmosphere is intellectual and classic.

Максим Князев

The white door

18+

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Аннотация

White Door (Book One of the Verdict Trilogy)

Genre: mysticism, horror, thriller

Writer Thomas Keen, who is going through a crisis and a divorce, buys an old Royal E-6000 typewriter at an antique shop. The seller warns: It chooses its owner on its own. Soon, a snowstorm cuts Tom off from the world, and he realizes: everything printed on the typewriter comes true. But it writes on its own. And its new story is about him. From the basement of the old house, the voice of his deceased daughter can be heard. Now Tom is not the author, but a character. To survive, he will have to finish the ending. But how can you win if you're just a line in someone else's novel? A claustrophobic horror about guilt, grief, and the cost of creativity.

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BOOK ONE: THE WHITE DOOR

Book One of The Sentence Trilogy

PROLOGUE: THE ANTIQUE SHOP

The old man had no teeth. That was the first thing Thomas Keene noticed. The second thing was the smell—gin and mothballs and something older, something that might have been grave dirt. The shop was tucked between a laundromat and a closed-down video rental in Bangor, Maine, and it looked like it hadn't seen a customer since the Carter administration.

Tom had wandered in out of boredom. The divorce had left him with nothing but time, and time was the enemy of a man who couldn't write. He'd been staring at a blank screen for six months. His agent called it "creative hibernation." His ex-wife called it "what you deserve."

"Looking for something specific, son?" The old man's voice was wet, like he had too much saliva and not enough teeth to hold it back.

Tom shrugged. "Just browsing."

The old man nodded toward the back corner. "Got a

beauty back there. Royal E-6000. Smart machine. Knows what you want to say before you say it."

Tom almost laughed. A typewriter that knew what he wanted to say? He'd been a best-selling horror novelist for fifteen years, and *he* didn't even know what he wanted to say anymore.

But he walked to the back anyway. And there it sat. It was sleek, black, and surprisingly modern-looking for something from the 1980s. The keys were crisp and clean. The small digital screen glowed faintly, even though it wasn't plugged in. Tom touched it. The plastic was warm. Too warm, like it had been sitting in the sun, even though the shop was cold enough to see your breath.

"How much?" Tom asked.

The old man showed his gums in what might have been a smile. "Two hundred. But I'll tell you something, son. This machine... it chooses its owner. Not the other way around."

Tom pulled out his wallet. "It's just a typewriter." The old man's eyes went dark. "That's what they all say. Right before they start typing."

Tom didn't ask what "they" meant. He handed over the cash, carried the machine to his car, and drove back to Jerusalem's Lot. The snow was already starting to fall.

CHAPTER ONE: TUESDAY

The snow started falling on a Tuesday, which seemed appropriate. Tuesdays had always been the day when shit went south for Thomas Keene. His father had died on a Tuesday. His first marriage had ended on a Tuesday. And now, on this particular Tuesday in December, the sky decided to dump three feet of the white stuff onto the town of Jerusalem's Lot—or 'The Lot,' as the locals called it, spitting the name out like a cherry pit. Tom stood at the window of the old farmhouse, nursing a cup of coffee that had gone cold twenty minutes ago. He watched the flakes spiral down, thick as dandruff from God's own scalp. The wind howled around the eaves, making the old timbers groan like a man with arthritis getting out of bed. It was a sound he'd grown used to over the last three years, ever since the divorce had forced him to buy this relic of a house at a price that was too good to be true.

There's a reason it's cheap, Tom, his realtor had said, her eyes darting toward the basement door. *Folks say it feels... watched.*

Tom had laughed it off. He was a horror writer, for Christ's sake. He *made* his living from things that felt watched. He'd written fourteen novels, seven of which had hit the *New York Times* bestseller list. But

that was five years ago. Now, his last book, *The Graveyard Shift*, had sold barely fifteen thousand copies. The reviews called it "tired" and "derivative." One particularly vicious blogger compared his prose to "wet cardboard left out in the rain."

So here he was. Forty-seven years old. Divorced. Broke. And staring at a blizzard that looked like it wanted to eat the world.

He checked his phone. No signal. The landline was dead too—the wires were probably down somewhere between here and town. He was cut off. Stranded. Alone. *Just like in one of your stories*, he thought, and grimaced. The irony was so thick you could choke on it.

He turned away from the window and looked at his desk. It was a massive oak thing, scarred with ink stains and cigarette burns from some previous owner. On it sat his new acquisition: the Royal E-6000. He sat down heavily in his chair. The springs creaked. He flexed his fingers, cracked his knuckles, and placed them on the keys. The plastic was cold against his skin.

"Okay, Tommy," he muttered to himself. "Just one sentence. Just one fucking sentence. That's all you need to get the ball rolling."

He took a breath and typed:

The house was quiet, too quiet, and Henry knew something was terribly wrong.

He stared at the words. They were... fine. Generic. The kind of opening you'd expect from a first-time writer who'd just discovered the genre. But it was a start.

He was about to type the second sentence when the screen flickered. He frowned. The power was still on, albeit flickering with the storm. But this wasn't a power flicker. The screen blinked black, then white again.

And there, underneath his sentence, was another one.

Tom looked at the window, but he couldn't see anything except the whirling white death outside. He leaned back. A chill went up his spine that had nothing to do with the draft from the window. That was... weird. The E-6000 had a word-prediction feature, he knew that. But it usually suggested single words, not entire sentences. And it certainly didn't type them in for you. He'd turned that feature off. He chalked it up to a glitch. Maybe the storm was affecting the internal circuits.

He typed another sentence:

Henry didn't want to go down into the basement, but he knew he had to.

He waited.

The screen flickered again, longer this time. The cursor jumped.

Thomas Keene didn't want to go down into the basement either, but he knew he had to eventually. He could feel it calling to him. A sound like a child crying, muffled by the dirt and the stone.

Tom's hands shot up from the keys as if they'd been burned. His heart was beating too fast. He felt a bead of sweat roll down his temple, even though the room was cold enough to see his breath.

What the hell? He scrolled up. The first sentence, his sentence,

was

still there. But the second and third sentences—*his* sentences, the ones he'd typed—were gone.

They'd been replaced by the machine's words. The machine was writing a story about a character named Thomas Keene. A character who lived in a farmhouse in a blizzard. A character who had a basement that was calling to him.

His basement.

He listened. The wind howled. The house groaned. And from somewhere below, so faint it was almost imagined, he heard it.

A whimper.

It was high and thin, the sound of a child trying very

hard not to cry. It came from beneath the floorboards, from the dark, damp cellar where he stored his boxes of old books and Christmas decorations. A cellar he hadn't been in for months. A cellar with a heavy, bolted door.

"It's the wind," he said aloud, his voice cracking.

"Just the wind. The house is old. They make noises. Settling. Pipes. That's all it is."

But it didn't sound like pipes. It sounded like a little girl, and she was scared.

He looked back at the typewriter. The screen had changed again. A new sentence appeared, typed as if by ghostly fingers:

Henry opened the door to the basement, but Tom was smarter than Henry. Tom wouldn't open the door.

Not until he read the next sentence. Tom stared at the screen, his mind racing. This was a

prank. It had to be. Someone had hacked the machine, or it had some kind of malicious software. He'd call the antique shop in the morning, demand a refund, maybe even threaten to sue. That's what he'd do.

But he knew, even as he thought it, that he was lying to himself. There was no Wi-Fi here. No Bluetooth. The storm had killed the cell signal. This machine was running on batteries, and it was doing something that

terrified him to his core.

The cursor blinked.

He reached out, his fingers trembling, and typed a question.

Who are you?

The screen paused. The cursor blinked three times, five times, ten times. He thought it was over. He thought it was just a glitch, an electrical hiccup, and he was about to unplug the damn thing and toss it out the window into the snow.

Then the words appeared:

I am the author. And you, Tom, are the character.

He laughed. It came out sharp and hysterical, a bark of sound that was swallowed by the howling wind.

"Very funny. Very fucking funny. You're a goddamn

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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