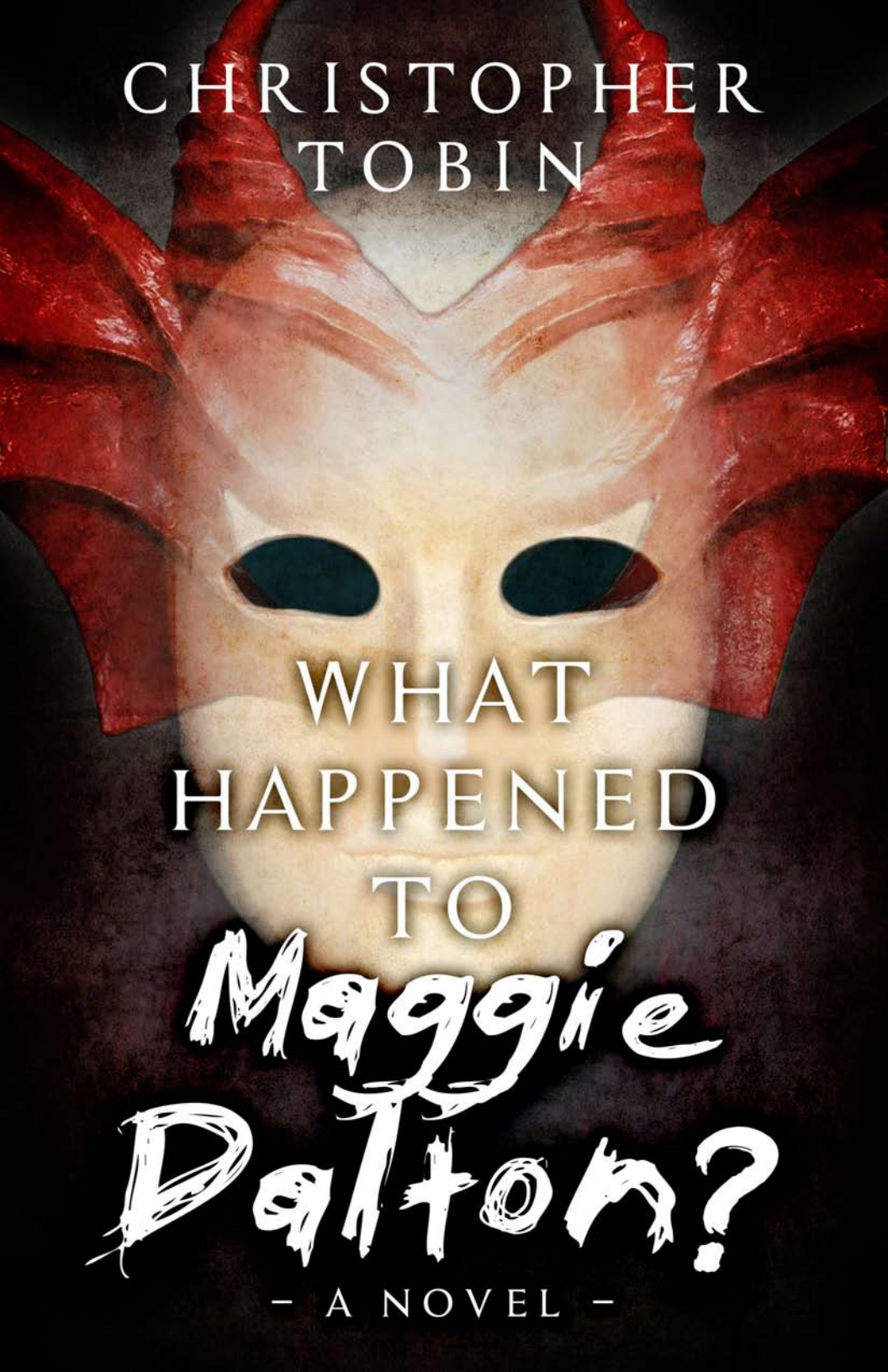




CHRISTOPHER
TOBIN

WHAT
HAPPENED
TO

*Maggie
Dalton?*

- A NOVEL -

WHAT
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*Maggie
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CHRISTOPHER
TOBIN

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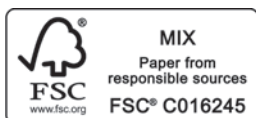
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For Dad

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Transcript from a CBC News Live News Report
Reporter: Gordon Irvine
12:10 A.M., Wednesday, November 3, 2010
Dildo, Newfoundland and Labrador

This is Gordon Irvine for CBC News, and I'm standing outside the residence of Richard and Morley Dalton here in the town of Dildo. Just a few minutes ago, two bodies were brought out of the house and loaded into two hearses. We do not know the names of the victims at this time, but two deaths have been confirmed. Police have not confirmed the cause of death or released information about recent disturbances that occurred here earlier this evening, but local law enforcement has communicated with us that the situation is now under control.

As you can see behind me, there has been a police presence on the property throughout the evening, and we know that around five thirty, an ambulance was called to the house. They didn't enter the home, however, until close to eleven o'clock tonight. A police presence has been established here at the Dalton residence for a few days now in response to the protesting and rioting that occurred here on Halloween night.

The family has been under police supervision since the incident at WoodRock Elementary School, which happened on October 12 last month. Another tragic event that has engaged local law enforcement in an ongoing investigation. The family members are not charged or suspected of wrongdoing at this time, but with growing unrest in the community toward the family, police have been maintaining their presence on the property.

We will report more information to you as it becomes available. This is Gordon Irvine reporting for CBC News, in Dildo, Newfoundland.

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Sermon of Father William Carlow
St. Patrick's Church, St. John's, Newfoundland
Sunday, October 3, 2010

As we gather here on this first Sunday in October, I reflect on how beautiful this time of year is here in Newfoundland. I have been living here for just over five years, as many of you know. I arrived here from the Vatican in September of 2005, and it has been a real treat getting to know the province, the parish here at St. Patrick's, and the weather, oh, the ever-changing weather of Newfoundland. October has come. It seems many of you were correct when you said that the fall is the one of the nicest times of year here on "The Rock." The changing leaves, that crisp smell of the air, with a hint of that sea salt, is something you don't get in Rome. The brilliant sunshine that casts its glow down upon the earth does give Newfoundland a feeling that I don't think it gets enough credit for.

But that word, change. Transformation. Change is something you can count on, but sometimes change happens and we cannot control it. We can't control the weather, now, can we? That's for certain, and as Newfoundlanders, you are remarkably positive in dealing with that grey, foggy, rainy, snowy fact. Well, some of you. I do love the snow, though.

The uncertain changing of the seasons here on your island is a force you have accepted, and it's been wonderful seeing it for myself. And now, leading into the fall, change has come again.

I came here to change. I came here to learn. I came here to see how many of you would take me into your community, trust me to help you trust your faith, and most importantly, to accept me into your hearts. The number of people who attend Mass hasn't gone down, but it hasn't risen, either. We are living in ever-changing times

when our faith is tested. When we are faced with a change, a change in something that we believed unchangeable, we react based on our hearts. Some turn to God, to their faith for guidance, some turn to their loved ones, or some, they turn their backs on their faith and on God. I came here with the hopes of serving as a conductor of God's faith to those who were in need. We all deal with change differently, and I hope I have served some of my purpose in your eyes.

I was a little surprised to see that not many of you needed my guidance, but I was even more surprised to see the generosity you showed me in welcoming me to your province. I think I ate fifteen pounds of molasses and touts in my first three months here. You have welcomed me with open arms, and I have tried to do the same. I see some new faces here tonight, and I see many familiar faces. After five years it feels like home.

Life constantly tests our faith. I was born in Nigeria, which is on the west coast of Africa. My mother died at a young age, so it was just me and my father. I spent the early years of my childhood in Nigeria, travelling with my father to different towns where he helped with building maintenance. With the passing of my mother, my father decided we needed a change.

An aspect of my life I have not shared with anyone is that the name I was given at birth was Wilan Njoku. Wilan means affection or friendship in Nigeria. My last name, Njoku, means guardian of the deity of the yam. My father decided to change our last name to something more *common* when we moved to Europe, specifically to Paris. I was twelve years old, and my father hoped to continue to work in construction and give me more options for an education. To change our last name was a decision he did not come to easily. But it was for my benefit. He was worried for me and wanted to remove an additional element of racial persecution. It was difficult. You have all trusted me, and so, that's an aspect of my life I wanted to share with you all here today. Even though my father had minimal education, he did manage to get some odd jobs while I went to school. After some difficult years there, we spent my teenaged years in Rome, where I discovered the Vatican and found my faith in God. My father lived long enough to see me become a priest, and then he passed away. That's my very brief story which I have shared with some of you in my time here.

WHAT HAPPENED TO MAGGIE DALTON?

I wanted to discover a little more of the world and decided on Newfoundland as my first assignment. It was a big move and a big change. This province is so wonderfully different from my home. I mean that positively. As some of you so adequately put it, that's "quite the move across the pond." Maybe I am misquoting. My apologies.

I have decided, though, that as we approach the new year, I may head back to Rome to reassess. Not that I need convincing to stay in Newfoundland, but there is a possibility that my help could be used elsewhere. And perhaps another disciple of God will be given the chance to see this most beautiful and most eastern point of North America.

I feel in my heart the change that is coming, and I owe it to you, this parish that has taken me in, to inform you of that change. I also feel a change coming that I cannot yet foresee. One of those surprising changes that will catch me off guard that I am impossibly trying to prepare for. I intend to stay until that feeling in my heart tells me it is okay to leave. I feel I still have some work left to do.

As the weather keeps changing, as life keeps changing, know that it has been a glorious five years I've spent with you. My sermon today is to say *thank you*. Thank you all for the changes you have given me, both as a visitor to your province and as your priest to serve your faith. May all of us accept change with an open heart, even though we cannot know the consequences of those changes until they have come to pass.

As we enter the fall, enjoy the beauty of nature's death in preparation for its rebirth. The colours will fade, the leaves will fall, and daylight will succumb to darkness a little earlier. But during this time, when darkness will occupy most of the days, just know that change will come again.

Let us bow our heads and pray.

*Tempted and tried, we're oft made to wonder
Why it should be thus all the day long;
While there are others living about us,
Never molested, though in the wrong.*

*Farther along we'll know more about it,
Farther along we'll understand why;
Cheer up, my brother, live in the sunshine,
We'll understand it all by and by.*

— W. B. Stevens, Barney E. Warren
Farther Along, 1911

I
Pretense

*Sometimes I wonder why I must suffer,
Go in the rain, the cold, and the snow,
When there are many living in comfort,
Giving no heed to all I can do.*

— W. B. Stevens, Barney E. Warren
Farther Along, 1911

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1

My name is Dickie Dalton. I'm from Dildo, Newfoundland, and my daughter is possessed by a demon. I think that's alliteration? It's not my intention to write comically, but as I sit here trying to type up the first sentence of this confession, I realize I giggled after I wrote that opening sentence. I think this will be a confession. A confession of sins? Maybe. My sins? Maybe. But not the sins of my family. I don't see what they have done wrong. The demon daughter has been the talk of the town for the past few weeks, and through the contemplation and reflection that has consumed our family this month, I've found myself sitting down and writing again after a thirty-year hiatus.

I'm a forty-five-year-old pipefitter who works offshore on an oil platform here in Newfoundland. The last time I sat down in front of a computer to write anything was back in secondary school, when writing was something I still had time, and interest, for. The need to get this story, or trauma, or whatever is going on, out of my head and make sense of it on paper obsesses me. Why has God allowed a demon to take control of my daughter? "Take control." She's possessed. Possession. Is it a generic demon? Or one specific? I don't know yet. I'm just a pipefitter.

My ten-year-old daughter, Maggie, is possessed by a demon. Writing out *demon* in these words just sent a heavy nausea to my stomach, yet great relief to my mind at the same time. We, my wife, Morley, and I, have seen the doctors, the child psychologist, two adult psychiatrists, have had the assessments, talked to social workers, teachers, and mental health experts. After almost a month of tests and the incident at her elementary school a few days ago, the decision was made by our family doctor that we start considering alternative medicine, or perhaps consulting with a priest. It's 2010 and my family isn't religious. We're the "practising" Catholics who attend church on

Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday. Why just those two dates? We just like going then, that's all. It's even unfair to say "practising Catholic," as there's no practising going on at all. So, is this confession a judgment on my lack of faith? Is this punishment? Is this God's "plan"? If there's a God, then that must mean that there is the opposite. The devil? Satan? And if that's the situation, then there must be angels and demons, right? Yes? No? I don't know. I don't know why I'm including questions like "right?" in this. You can't answer me. I don't even know who you are or if this will be read. I guess I'm just being hopeful. Or am I trying to find my faith?

2

How much will do? How much of this backstory is necessary?

Your mother just took another round of sleeping pills, and I have too much energy and have too much on my mind to sleep. I haven't slept properly in about two weeks, and currently it is 12:35 a.m. on October 27, 2010. I'm in the playroom sitting at the desk at the computer. It's dark in here, except for the glow of the screen, and I feel alone, and whatever it is upstairs just moaned. Goosebumps on my arms, followed by the urge to throw up, go back upstairs, and be with her, but there is nothing left to do at the moment. Maggie has enough sedation in her to put an elephant to sleep, yet she—no, *it*—it's still beckoning me upstairs. A deep and low growl that cackles from time to time. It scares the living shit out of me.

This feels like a decent start. I remembered those days back in high school that yours truly wanted to be a writer. I was hanging around a ragtag group of "skeets" ("*. . . a person who speaks in non-intelligent, non-sensible, curse-riddled semi-English, dresses commonly and typically but not stereotypically, in baggy wannabe 'gangsta' clothing, or, more commonly, bedtime wear. They often deal and consume drugs, drink, smoke, and are self-serving entities, gaining respect through the more skeets they know and the more money they have.*")

Used in a sentence: a) "*The skeet stole my car,*" b) "*Some skeet burned down the shed,*" and/or, c) "*The skeet ran from the cops.*"

I'm not proud to say that I was one. I like to think I turned things around, but I've been a skeet of a husband and not much of a father.

The guys I hung around with were definitely skeets. They were not supportive of the arts and/or the artistic expression. If it wasn't hanging out, drinking, smoking, and acting out frivolity, it was bullshit. Frivolity. Such a lovely word that I don't use enough, or at all. I don't even know why I thought of it. I'm stereotyped now just like my friends were in high school. As a hands-on manual labourer, roughneck. Just needed to say that I am officially educated in my field. I have the required courses and training that led to my trade on HVAC systems. My focus, or specialty, is in welding. That job doesn't really provide extra time for Dickens and Shakespeare. The b'ys (slang for *the boys*) mock anything that isn't girls, smokes, booze, and anything with a motor in it. It's still true now for some of the guys I work with, but back in the school days, the mocking you'd get for showing an interest in something "artsy" was brutal. They were the friends I had in elementary school, so, by either the law of school, or because my town is so small, they were the friends I had in high school. Some of them are still my friends today. Most of them are up on the mainland now.

My interest in writing didn't go completely unnoticed. My teachers knew I was different. So did my parents. "You are better than those arseholes," they'd say, both teachers and parents. Maybe I was, maybe I still am, maybe I'm not. But they were the b'ys. We didn't care about anything, and we had good times. But yes, I'll admit, they're arseholes. Does this fit in the right place in this story? Probably not. Point is, I'm an arsehole, too. I've come to accept that the past few weeks. Looking back on my life up until now, I've realized that I've been one lucky arsehole. An arsehole skeet from Dildo. That'll do.

3

Dildo, Newfoundland. Yes. Yes. Yes. You are reading that right. Where did the name come from? I don't know, and I was born here. Has there been talk of changing the name over the course of its history? Absolutely not. We're about ninety kilometres from the capital city of St. John's, and yes, the name seems to attract the tourists. While I'm

WHAT HAPPENED TO MAGGIE DALTON?

“I don’t remember anything after the movie. I don’t remember getting home, or what Mom and Dad asked when I went upstairs to my room.

“I do remember that I sat on the bed for only a few minutes when I had to check underneath it.

“I slept with the lights on for about a month after that.

“It was a great night, but I’ll never watch it again.”

Kenneth Tobin

Born October 15, 1954

Passed April 6, 2019



KING'S PHOTOGRAPHY & MORE

Christopher Tobin is a stand-up comedian, dramaturge, and teacher. As a comedian, he began at Yuk Yuks International Comedy Club in St. John's in 2011 and has since appeared in three *Just for Laughs* showcases, the Braxton Comedy Festival, the St. John's Comedy Festival, and various shows as part of Downtown Comedy in St. John's.

As a dramaturge, Christopher has written and performed in stage adaptations of Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone*—teleplays adapted for live stage performance for School Zone Productions, which has produced fifteen of these episodes over the course of five shows during 2012–2017. A graduate of Memorial University of Newfoundland with a Bachelor of Education, he teaches junior high and high school English. He lives with his family in St. John's.