

SWEENEY TODD

The
demon barber of fleet street



Sweeney: *I'll cut your throat from ear to ear if you repeat one word of what passes in this shop, or are to make any supposition, or draw any conclusion from anything you may see or hear, or fancy you see or hear. Do you understand me?*

Tobias: *I won't say anything, Mr Todd, if I do, may I be made into veal pies at Lovett's in Bell Yard.*

George Dibdin Pitt, *The String of Pearls; or The Fiend of Fleet Street* (1842, or 1847)

Noel Gaiman & Michael Zullo



Taboo 6 – The Sweeney Todd Penny Dreadful

Sweeney Todd, as it will appear in *Taboo*, will be a work in progress. Messrs Zulli and Gaiman reserve to themselves the right to alter, amend, revise, delete or otherwise change the work between this appearance and its final form.

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Mr. Zulli was (gratefully) assisted in the design & production of this book by Mr. S.R. Bisette and Mr. M. Arsenault

Sweeney Todd: A Brief Introduction by Neil Gaiman

Whether there be really any gradation in Crimes, or whether we do not mistake in supposing the transgression of one Law of God more heinous than that of another, would be a Point too difficult and too abstract for us to enter into, but as Human Nature is more shocked at the shedding of Blood than at any other Offence, we may be allowed to treat those who are guilty of it as bloody and unnatural Men, who besides their losing all respect towards the Laws of God, show also a want of that compassion and tenderness which seems incident to the Human Species.

Anonymous, Lives of the Criminals (1735)

Lupin: And wilt meet me at twelve o'clock near Temple Bar? For the work of the Lord calleth his servant and I must begone.

George Dildin Pitt, The String of Pearls; or The Fiend of Fleet Street (1842, or 1847.)



Temple Bar 1879

Fleet Street, in the City of London, is by tradition the location of the story of Sweeney Todd, commonly known as the Demon Barber.

The entrance to Fleet Street was signified for many years by Temple Bar, a Christopher Wren arch, built in 1670 on the site of previous gates, the first of which was probably erected four hundred years before by the Knights Templar; and the entrance to Fleet Street is the entrance to the City of London, that anomalous city within a city.

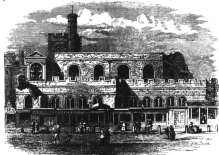
Temple Bar still exists, although it is no longer in London. You may see it if you wish, although barbed wire discourages those who might approach too close.



—•—•—•—•—•—•—•—•—•—

The location of Sweeney Todd's barber shop has been disputed for many years; although most accounts agree that it was part of, or abutted, St Dunstan's church, and, indeed, that Sweeney's cellars gave onto the vaults of St Dunstan's (for it was in those vaults that the remains of Sweeney's victims – those parts of his victims that could not be translated into pies, at any rate – were laid to rest).

A new St Dunstan's, built in 1830, stands in Fleet Street now; like the previous St Dunstan's on that location, it is still home to King Lud and his two sons, the mythical founders of London. Weathered statues of the trio, moved from the City Wall when that was demolished, wait in the vestry porch; and Lud's sons strike the hour in St Dunstan's tower clock, as they have for five hundred years.



OLD ST. DUNSTAN'S CHURCH

Sweeney: By the way Tobias, while I am operating on this gentleman's... chin... the figures at St Dunstan's are about to strike: the exhibition will excite your curiosity and allow me to shave our customer without interruption.

George Dibdin Pitt, The String of Pearls; or The Fiend of Fleet Street (1842, or 1847)





Sweeney Todd is about Manners, and Mirrors, and Meat. It's about razors, and women, and men. It's about death, and about London.

It's about the past, and about the legacy from the past that we carry with us forever.

You never know what you'll find when you go looking for something. *Sweeney Todd* began for us as a small, elegant chance to retell a familiar tale, and has grown and shifted with each new jigsaw piece until now it squats monstrous and dark and still, waiting to be told.



It is said that at the moment when Sweeney Todd was hurled from the ladder the ruins of his shop in Fleet Street fell with a thundering crash, and that the dust and ashes hovering in the air took the form of a huge gibbet, with the figure of a man suspended upon it.

Be that so or not, the charred ruins were soon carted away, and another house built upon the site of the place where so many awful cruelties had been perpetrated.

Other buildings were pulled down and rebuilt, and people began to be in error as to the exact spot where Sweeney Todd's shop really stood, and as years went on the villain's name became spoken of merely as a legendary person.

But he lived, as the *Newgate Calendar* of the time testifies.

There is also a full-length portrait still in existence, depicting him in his shop, with its old wig blocks and racks of razors.

Frederick Hazleton, *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, novel (1862)



S

wenny Todd is the story of a barber who was a very bad man (although, in most versions of the tale, a very good barber). It is safe to say that the tale gained wide prominence in Victorian England during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and that two early popularisers of the tale were playwright George Dibdin Pitt (1799-1853) and an unknown author of *Penny Dreadfuls* – the generic name for much Victorian periodical literature: blood and thunder tales, price one penny.



It is possible that the tale of Sweeney Todd may have been around for longer than that, as an oral tale or a folk-song. It may even have been based on a true story (there are rumours, and perhaps more than rumours).

Thomas Peckett Prest (1810-1879) may well have written some of the first *Sweeney Todd Penny Dreadful*, published by Edward Lloyd in his *People's Periodical and Family Library* in 1846 and 1847. (There is also a tradition that the work was begun by one George MacFarren, who had written the first few chapters before he turned the serial over to Prest because of failing eyesight. None of those portions of *The String of Pearls* that I have read, read [in my opinion] like other works that are reliably attributed to Prest, but attribution of authorship in the world of cheap Victorian literature is, at best, more than a little dodgy.) The first *Penny Dreadful*, written or not by Prest, was serialised over 18 issues, and was called *The String of Pearls; or the Sailor's Gift. A Romance of Peculiar Interest*.

George Dibdin Pitt was a playwright who wrote a play, with or without Prest, either based on the *Penny Dreadful* or soon to be plagiarised by it, featuring the terrible Mr Todd, first performed some time in the 1840s (accounts differ), under the title *The String of Pearls or the Fiend of Fleet Street*; although the title changed over the next ten years, as the fiend of Fleet Street took his rightful place at the head of the title.

The men of the eighteenth century who were used to these things, who made no protest when Ann Martin in 1761 was sentenced to a mere two years for putting out her children's eyes and going a-begging with them (that at a time when men were being hanged for stealing sheep) – they had their *Beggar's Opera* and their *Prison Breakers* and they laughed: we, who cannot believe a word of it, laugh too. The Victorians wept, and believed everything they were sold.

Montagu Slater. Introduction to 1928 reissue of George Dibdin Pitt's *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.





Sweeney's fame over the next forty years was spread through the medium of the theatre. Many different versions of the play were written and performed during this period, almost all of which have been lost to us.

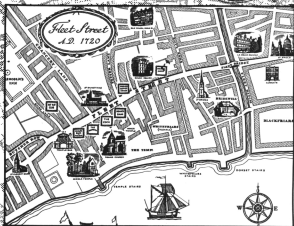
Frederick Hazleton was the author of one of these plays, first performed about 1862, which while based on Dibdin Pitt's play introduced a number of new elements. Hazleton himself novelised his play; published in 1862 by George Vickers, "For Sale in Bookshops, Newsagents and Theatres," it was priced at one penny. (This is the only Victorian version of the tale to have been reprinted in its entirety in recent times; it was reissued with a lengthy introduction by Peter Haining by W.H. Allen in 1980.)

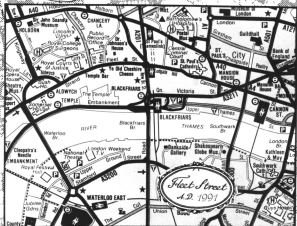
In the 1890s a new penny dreadful appeared, far longer than the original, published by Charles Fox and Co.: *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. It took elements from the plays and the original penny dreadful, extensively plagiarised the Hazleton Novelisation, and expanded the whole out (occasionally slightly desperately) to 576 closely-typed double-columned pages of story – 12 pages a month for two years; a 48-part story.

Peter Haining reports another anonymous Charles Fox publication, *The Romance of Newgate* (1884), a reprinted collection of lives of criminals imprisoned in Newgate prison, which contains a brief, undated entry about one Sweeney Todd, a Fleet Street barber, who had been arrested on "the serious charges now being investigated," but gives no further details.

Also in the 1880s another penny dreadful, *Boy's Standard*, retold the story of Sweeney Todd in *The Link Boys of Old London – Mrs Lovett*. Sweeney's accomplice, has become Mrs Darkman, but otherwise the story is similar, although perhaps more inventively grisly than the others.









Each time the story of Sweeney has been told it gains some elements, loses others. It has been filmed a number of times: as a burlesque silent comedy (1926), again as a bloody silent thriller in 1928. *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* was filmed in 1936, starring Todd Slaughter as the barber (Slaughter toured for many years in a stage version of the tale), and again in 1969, under the title *Bloodthirsty Butchers*, by cheap filmmaker Andy Milligan (an eminently missable film).

While there have been many retellings of the tale over the last one hundred and fifty years in plays, pulps, even a ballet, the most widely known, and probably the best is the Stephen Sondheim musical. In 1974 English playwright Christopher Bond crafted a new version of *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* based on elements of the Dibdin Pitt play, and introducing a far more sympathetic interpretation of Sweeney than had hitherto been seen; and it was this play that was adapted into the 1979 Broadway musical by Stephen Sondheim (music and lyrics) and Hugh Wheeler (book). (While the Bond play and the Sondheim musical are both highly recommended, those familiar with the story that they tell should not expect to see it reprised in our tale).

We cannot, we will not, believe that such persons as Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett ever came into this world otherwise than ready-made man and woman!

Any other belief concerning such fiends is human shape is too repugnant.

Anonymous - *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Penny Dreadful circa 1880

"His face changes - it's a fox's - a serpent's - hideous hideous... There - there! What a strange thing it is for the air to be so full of blood. Do we breathe blood and only fancy it air? Hush! Not a word. He comes with a serpent's face... There they come - all the serpents, and Todd is their king."

(From Tobias Ragg's delirium speeches) Anonymous, *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, Penny Dreadful (circa 1880).

Each generation tells and re-tells the story of Sweeney. We get, if you will, the Sweeneys we deserve. Shock-headed, long-fingered Sweeneys, crafty and scheming; bull-necked, shave-headed Sweeneys, Hyde to the earlier Sweeney's Jekyll; Irish, Scots, and French Sweeneys. Bald or blond or brilliant, maligned or malicious, the Sweeneys open their cut-throat razors and get into line.

Ours is waiting for you now.





Take one hesitant step into Sweeney's world, and you've entered a shop full of mirrors, all of them distorting, lying, untruthful – or at best, unreliable. These are not mirrors in which it would be safe to shave.

I remember the incoherence with which I phoned Michael Zulu after spending an initial handful of days in the British Library in the British Museum, stumbling through sundry Sweeney Documents; trying to explain to him that it didn't make sense – none of it – and why it didn't make sense; the sensation that I was trapped in a season of plays by a tiny road company that used the same actors over and over again in a variety of different roles; the problems I was having in finding any kind of original text.

The trouble with Sweeneys is that they are all derivative. Of what, though, is where the problems begin: there are precious few scholarly studies of Sweeney, and all of them contradict each other (and sometimes themselves).

Research is a very enlightening thing. It takes very little to disabuse one of the idea that secondary sources are reliable. For a start, writers and academics are a lazy mob, who steal from each other continually, and who only occasionally do primary research; which means that if you see a fact repeated it does nothing to increase its chances of veracity. All it means is that someone took it from somewhere else. The territory of Sweeney is quicksand or marsh (like the area that is now Fleet Street, before the Knights Templar began to reclaim it for their own use, eight hundred years ago).

There is so little we can be sure of. Sweeney lived, or he didn't. A version of the tale was told in the 1820s, set in France, but there is evidence that the French had pirated it from a 1795 English tale; at any rate it is apparent that elements of the tale were the stuff of common London urban legend before the appearance of the 1840s play and tale; perhaps the saga of Sweeney Todd was derived from the *Ballad of the Seven* (or, in some versions, *Five*) *Lady Barbers of Drury Lane* (cited as a *Seventeenth century ballad* by one authority, but already a historical curiosity to John Aubrey, writing in 1680).

But there are roots and archetypes; and these we will trace and explore in the coming work. And there are dark magics that run beneath the tales, like a hidden river, like a sewer beneath a city street, and this too we shall touch on as we go.





Jarvis: Talking of pies, I fancy I could eat one. TAKES PIE OFF TRAY AND EATS VORACIOUSLY. Beautiful! Delicious! Lots of gravy! HE SUDDENLY DISCOVERS A LONG HAIR, VIEWS IT MYSTERIOUSLY, AND WINDS IT ROUND HIS FINGER. Somebody's been combing their hair. I don't think that pie's a nice 'un. PUTS PART OF EATEN PIE BACK, AND TAKES ANOTHER. This is better! Done to a turn! Extremely savory! PUTS HIS HAND IN HIS MOUTH. What's this? A bone? No - a button! I don't think I like pies now. How did that button come into that pie? Oh! I'm very poorly.

George Dibdin Pitt, *The String of Pearls; or The Fiend of Fleet Street*. (1842, or 1847)

"We are rather short of - of meat," said Mrs Lovett, with one of her strange, metallic smiles.

"The devil! You are? Ain't there butchers enough?"

"Oh dear yes," said Mrs Lovett; "but we could not get such meat as we put in our pies at the butcher's."

"You kill your own, mum, then, I suppose?", the man queried.

Anonymous - *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Penny Dreadful circa 1880

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I fear that what I am going to say will spoil your appetites; but the truth is beautiful at all times, and I have to state that Mrs Lovett's pies are made of human flesh!"

Anonymous - *The String of Pearls; or the Sailor's Gift, A Romance of Peculiar Interest*. 1846 Penny Dreadful.



Man is a dining animal.

Mrs Isabella Beeton, *The Book of Household Management*. 1863.





Whatever his roots (and we shall be exploring these in greater depth in the actual tale than we shall here) Sweeney is part of a line that began with the first innkeeper ever to cut the throat of a lonely traveller and feed him to the next party to come that way; that continued through such inestimable gentlemen as Sawney Beane, "the Man-eater of Midlothian", who, with his horde of incestuous brats, was said to have preyed on travellers in the 14th century (at the height of his hunting it was thought that wolves were running, and who's to say they weren't?); it continued through to, for example, the Bender family of Cherryvale, Kansas, who disposed of many travellers who stopped at their house to eat, and who, in 1873, stepped out of bloody reality and into the shifting world of fiction. And the anthropophagous and inhospitable lineage of Sweeney continues, it is to be regretted, into today's headlines.



Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

Ecclesiastes. Ch 1 Vs 1.

Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett between them embody two basic human needs. The need to look good, and the need to eat. Journalists and whores both claim themselves the oldest professionals; but barbers and cooks were there early. And journalists and whores, barbers and cooks there will be in abundance in *Sweeney Todd*; and thieves and highwaymen, cut-throats and revolutionaries, mud-larks and aristocrats, poets and vicars, pirates and pie-men.

Also plagues, ditches, sewers and hidden rivers. And recipes.

(MRS LOVETT is overcome and TODD draws his razor across her throat and places her upstage, R.)

Todd *The partner of my wrongs has met a just fate. The house is in flames. No matter! I dare them all to do their worst - for I'll sell my life dearly!*

(Going up steps - is met by SIR RICHARD - TODD throws him into corner, R. Then BIG BEN enters and seizes him, exclaiming 'Easy does it' - BEN is thrown, L. - SIMON enters - TODD throws him off. The scene is now in flames - red fire - TODD is escaping up the steps - OFFICERS enter at every side and fire at him - at the same time the scene opens at back - the steps give way - TODD falls dead - the whole scene at back is enveloped in flames - Tableaux)

CURTAIN

From *Sweeney Todd, The Barber of Fleet Street, or The String of Pearls, A Drama in three acts* (Founded on the Popular Work of the Same title). By Fred. Hazleton Esq. c. 1862.





Such is the unaccountable folly which reigns in too great a part of the human species, that by their own ill-deeds, they make such laws necessary for the security of men's persons and properties, as by their severity would appear cruel and inhuman, and doubtless those laws which we esteem barbarous in other nations, and even some which appear so though anciently practised in our own, had their rise from the same cause.

Anon. Lives of the Criminals. 1735.



To investigate Sweeney – indeed to investigate a distant gallery of Sweeney Todds and Mrs Lovetts, –Mister Zulli and I shall be using the medium of a journalist in Victorian London, Master Edmund Wyld.

It is he who will explore the past for us: along his way he will uncover clandestine wars and secret societies, strange magics and old religions, maps to forgotten cities, lost legacies and dangerous birthrights. We will walk streets and alleys that run with offal and mud, lose ourselves in the rookeries and bordellos of old London, and find ourselves... perhaps... reflected in the stained glass of Mr Todd's mirror, or the gleaming silver blade of his razor.

Sweeney Todd is the story of a city, and of a street.

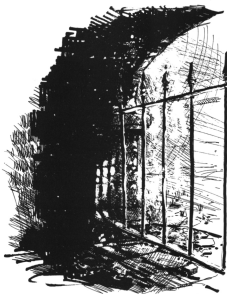
It's a story about stories. Urban legends and legendary towns; dead kings and virgin queens.

It's about food.

It's about patterns, and reflections, and professionals.

And perhaps along the way you'll learn more than is comfortable about pies, and pearls, and the past.





LUPIN: *Woe to England, for Todd is escaped! Woe, woe, woe for the roaring lion is abroad and no throat shall remain of a piece. Oh, that my head were a fountain of water, running pure milk to weep salt tears for the crying sins of this nation.*

George Dibdin Pitt, *The String of Pearls; or The Fiend of Fleet Street*. (1842, or 1847.)



When the world was young there were bad men, and bad men there will probably be until the time comes when the globe shall cease to form an atom of creation; but there never was, and let us hope there never will be, such a wretch as Sweeney Todd, most appropriately called The Demon Barber of Fleet Street.

Frederick Hazleton, Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street. Novel. (1862)

A fable, pure and simple, offered by Neil Gaiman and Michael Zulli. This story was written and drawn for an upcoming comicbook anthology packaged by CETA (Creators for Ethical Treatment of Animals), with Zulli extrapolating on Gaiman's bare-boned parable to fashion what lies before you.

One from the heart.

BIBLIOGRAPHY—MICHAEL ZULLI

The Puma Blues (written by Stephen Murphy, 1986-present, Aardvark One Int./Mirage/self-published; collected as *The Puma Blues: Book One: Watch That Man*, issues #1-12, 1988; *The Puma Blues: Book Two: Sense of Doubt*, issues #13-19, 1989; plus minicomic in *Mirage Minipack*, Mirage, 1989); *Taboo 2.3* (SpiderBaby, 1989-present); *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #31* (with Stephen Murphy, Mirage, 1990); *Shell Shock #1, 2* (Mirage, 1990); *Sandman #13* (written by Neil Gaiman, DC Comics, 1990); (Unpublished: "Mourning of the Magicians," *Swamp Thing #88*, written by Rick Veitch, DC Comics, 1989)

NEIL GAIMAN

BOOKS:

Ghastly Beyond Belief (w/Kim Newman, Arrow, 1984); *Don't Panic* (Pocket Books, 1988); *Good Omens* (w/Terry Pratchett, Gollancz/Workman, 1990)

SHORT STORIES:

"Webs" in *More Tales From the Forbidden Planet* (Titan, 1990)
"Foreign Parts" in *Words Without Pictures* (Arcane/Eclipse, 1990)

COMICS:

Violent Cases (art: Dave McKean, 1987, Escape/Titan Books); *Black Orchid* (art: Dave McKean, 3 issues, 1988-89, DC Comics); *Sandman* (Dec., 1988-present, DC Comics; issues #8-16 collected as *Sandman: The Doll's House*; "Signal to Noise," 8 chapters serialized in *The Face* (art: Dave McKean, 1989-90); *Miracleman #17*-up (art: Mark Buckingham, Eclipse, 1990)

BABYCAKES

BABYCAKES

A FEW YEARS BACK, ALL THE ANIMALS WENT AWAY.

WE WAKE UP ONE MORNING, AND THEY JUST **AREN'T** THERE ANYMORE.

THEY DIDN'T EVEN LEAVE US A NOTE, OR SAY GOODBYE. WE NEVER FIGURED OUT QUITE **WHY** THEY'VE GONE.

WE **AVOID** THEM.

SOME OF US THOUGHT THE **WORLD** HAD **CHANGED**, BUT IT **HADN'T**.

THERE JUST **WEREN'T** ANY MORE **ANIMALS**. NO **CATS** OR **RABBITS**, NO **DOGS** OR **WHALES**, NO **BIRDS** IN THE **SKY**, NO **BIRDS** IN THE **SKY**.

WE WERE ALL **ALONE**.

WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.

WE **WANDERED** AROUND **LOST**, FOR A **WHILE**, AND THEN SOMEONE **POINTED** OUT THAT **JUST** BECAUSE WE DIDN'T HAVE **ANIMALS** ANY MORE, THAT **WAS** NO **REASON** TO **CHANGE** OUR **LIVES**.

BRIBBLES

TESTING WING ROOMS 101-102
www.flybee.com

NO REASON TO **CHANGE** OUR **LIVES**, OR TO **CHANGE** TESTING PRODUCTS THAT **RIGHT** **GLAD** US **ALONE**.

AFTER ALL,
THERE WERE
STILL BABIES.

BABIES
CAN'T
TALK.

THEY CAN
HARDLY MOVE.

A BABY IS NOT
A RATIONAL,
THINKING
CREATURE.



WE MADE BABIES. AND WE USE THEM.

SOME OF THEM WE ATE. BABY
FLESH IS TENDER, AND EXCELLENT.



WE FLIBED THESE BORN,
AND DEBIBATED OUR-
SELVES IN IT. BABY FLESH
IS SOFT, AND COMFORTABLE.

THIS
FRONT IS
HUMAN

FRONT
OF ALL
HUMAN

SOME OF
THEM WE
TESTED.

WE TAPED OFF THEIR
EYES, BURNED THEIR
GENES, AND SHAMPOOED
IN A SOAP AT A TIME.





WE SCORCHED THEM, AND SCALDED THEM, WE BURN'T THEM, WE CLAPPED THEM AND PLANTED ELECTRODES INTO THEIR BRAINS, WE GRAFTED, AND WE FREEZE, AND WE IRRADIATED.



IT WAS **HARD**, OF COURSE, BUT IT WAS **NECESSARY**.



NO ONE
COULD DENY
THAT.



WITH THE
ARMIES
GONE, WHAT
ELSE COULD
WE DO?

SOME
PEOPLE
COMPLAINED,
OF COURSE.
BUT THEN,
THEY ALWAYS
PO.



U.S.D.A.
MEMPHIS
CENTER
NO. 002 48

JUL 21 1964

AND
EVERYTHING
WENT BACK
TO NORMAL.

ONLY...



YESTERDAY, ALL THE
BABIES WERE GONE.

WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY
WENT, WE DON'T EVEN SEE
THEM GO.

WE DON'T KNOW
WHAT WE'RE GOING
TO DO WITHOUT
THEM.



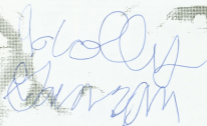
BUT WE'LL THINK OF
SOMETHING.
HUMANS ARE SMART.
IT'S WHAT MAKES US
SUPERIOR TO THE
ANIMALS AND THE
BABIES.



WE'LL FIGURE
SOMETHING OUT.

Neil Gaiman : words Michael Zulli : art Steve Bissette : inks

HOLLY'S STORY



Frame and counterpoint: complementing "Blood Monster" at this volume's beginning is "Holly's Story," the first ever composed by five-year-old Holly Gaiman.

"Holly's Story" does not appear here as an act of hubris or nepotism. Neil mailed it to both Michael and I as an amusement, nothing more, but Michael in particular found the story lingering long after he'd read it. "It scared the shit out of me," Michael recalls, "it's that simple."

"What fascinates me about the story is that it's entirely content," he says. "Everything is naked subconscious. She can't assemble the story in the fashion an adult would, so it is pure storytelling: there is no artifice.

"It's specifically female, too. It's a little girl's story. It's not a little boy's story, it's very much a little girl's story. Because it's so unconscious, so surreal - being basically male, it's scary to me. When you connect that deeply to a woman's terror, a girl's terror, what makes her afraid, it's particularly hair-raising."

What follows is Michael's lyrical rendition of the second half of "Holly's Story" per Holly's own very specific art directions to Michael (the first half found dark-haired Holly look-alike Jill and her imaginary blonde friend Lucy Jane held prisoner, escaping, and hiding in a wig shop).

"I had to tell him what to do," Holly recalls. Michael confirms this, adding, "What I tried to do was translate exactly what she told me, precisely what was written on the page, free association and all. 'We have to hide under a hole': how do you draw somebody hiding under a hole? I approached it as literally as I could. The interplay between the characters, where one of the little girls may or may not be there, really... that was difficult. That was Holly's intent, so I approached it as straightforward as possible. You just have to tap into the little kid inside you and let it go, while at the same time you have to call up these incredible technical resources as an adult... I think it was the most fun I've had in a long time."

BIBLIOGRAPHY - MICHAEL ZULLI

The Puma Blues 1-23 (written by Stephen Murphy, 1986-present, Aardvark One Int'l/Mirage/self-published; collected as The Puma Blues Book One: Watch That Man (issues #1-12, 1988); The Puma Blues Book Two: Sense of Doubt (issues #13-19, 1989); plus mini-comic in Mirage Minipack, Mirage, 1989); Taboo 2-5 (SpiderBaby, 1989-present); Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #31 (with Stephen Murphy), 35, 37 (Mirage, 1990-91); Shell Shock #1,2 (Mirage, 1990); Sandman #13 (written by Neil Gaiman; DC Comics, 1990); Noodles (Tundra Sketchbook Series v. 3; Tundra, 1991). Unpublished: "Mourning of the Magician", intended for DC Comics' Swamp Thing #88 (written by Rick Veitch; 1989).

HOLLY'S STORY

CHAPTER ONE

HOLLY GAIMAN and MICHAEL ZULLI



Hooray! Hooray!
'We're in america
where we wanted to go!

Ohh, where's dad and mum?
'We don't have anyone.
We don't know where to go.
'We don't have any money.



'We're not in america
we're in a dark place.
All right?



Oh let's find a way out
of this snaky old trap.



It's not a trap.



Hello--oo! It is a trap!
Oh hello. Where are you?

They started coughing.



I'm a wicked witch.
All right? you little piggies.
you little fairies.



We're not fairies
we're human creatures.



All right. Then
human creatures
well will you be sure...

Little witchy witchy...




Her mother, we better
hide under the bed. All right?
Jane?




Hiya! Good, I found a way out.
Everyone knows me.
Even mum and dad.

Where's her baby? Has she
got her baby? Yes or No?



[Draw a picture of a baby here with her mother.
And that is Jane's mother's baby. All right.]



All little witchy witchies. Go away!
My little daughter's a silly poopoo.
All right? Little witchywitchies.



We're not witches
we're human creatures.



Hooray!
We're out of his trap!

Oh witchy witchies? Little witchy witchies!
Where are you? All right? You little creatures!
All right? Where are you? You little creatures!



Quickly Lucy Jane we must run
and hide under this hole.



We can't do anything.
All right, Lucy Jane.



Where is Dad and Mum?
Has she had her baby yet,
again? Again yes or no?



Lucy Jane I am ill.
All right? You are so funny.
Okay? You are doing something wrong.
Okay?



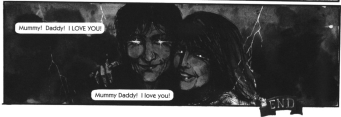
Let's get out of here:
there's a door.



What are
you doing?

I am singing.





SWEENEY TODD

Michael Zulli

Neil Gaiman

Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street is one of England's most venerable bogymen. As elucidated in Neil Gaiman and Michael Zulli's introduction to their series in the *Sweeney Todd* 'Penny Dreadful', Sweeney

Todd's origins have been obscured by time and the frustratingly vague "traditions" of questionable authorships and dubious character origins.

Many of you may be familiar with the more recent incarnations: Stephen Sondheim and Harold Prince's triumphant Broadway production (launched at New York City's Uris Theatre March 1, 1979), which had been inspired by Sondheim's 1973 viewing of Christopher Bond's contemporary *Sweeney Todd* at the Stratford Theatre Royal in London. Perhaps you've enjoyed Ted Slaughter's flamboyant incarnation in the otherwise timid British

1936 film (available from Rhino Video & others) derived from George Dibdin Pitt's 1840s play *The String of Pearls, or the Fiend of Fleet Street* and Frederick Hazleton's 1862 variation.

Before Hazleton and Pitt and Thomas Peckett Prest (traditionally cited as the author of the first 'Penny Dreadful' Sweeney serial), research falters. "It is possible that the tale of Sweeney Todd may have been around as an oral tale or folk song," Neil tells us. "It may even have been based on a true story (there are rumours, and perhaps more than rumours)."

Be satisfied for now to know that *Sweeney Todd* is the tale of Sweeney and Mrs. Lovett, of vanity and virgin queens, of the past and pies, pearls and meat.

Sweeney Todd is also about the telling of horror tales: when and why they are told, and how they change with each telling. In each telling of Sweeney's tale, the barber's mirror has reflected a different age, each with its own values and manners and fears. The values and manners change, but one thing remains constant: the fear.

Neil and Michael intend to touch upon *all* of this, and much more, in their own novel, debuting here in the pages of *Taboo*.

Sweeney's tale is about to be told again, gentle reader, as it has never been told before.

It begins here.

Breathe deep.

Here be Monsters.



Early 'Penny Dreadful' illustration of Sweeney Todd, artist unknown, from *The String of Pearls, or the Sailor's Gilt: A Romance of Peasloe Harbour*. Traditionally credited to George MacFadden and/or Thomas Peckett Prest, published in *The Peoples Periodical and Family Library* (November 21, 1846; Edward Lloyd, editor & publisher, London).

BIBLIOGRAPHY - NEIL GAIMAN

COMICS (writer only): With artist Dave McKean: *Violent Cases* (1987, Escape/Titan Books; color edition Tundra Publishing, 1991); *Black Orchid* (3 issues, 1988-89, DC Comics; collected edition 1991); "Signal to Noise" (8 chapters serialized in *The Face*, 1989-90), collected with additional material (Gollancz, 1992); *Hellbiker #27* (DC Comics, 1990). With various artists: *Sandman* (DC, 1988-present, DC Comics; issues #1-8 collected as *Sandman: Preludes and Nocturnes*, 1991, #8-16 collected as *Sandman: The Doll's House*, 1990; #17-20 collected as *Sandman: Dream Country*, 1991); *Miraculous #17-up* (art by Mark Buckingham, Eclipse, 1990-present); *The Books of Magic* (4 issues, DC Comics, 1990-91).

BOOKS: *Ghastly Beyond Belief* (w/ Kim Newman; Arrow, 1984); *Don't Panic* (Pocket Books, 1988); *Good Omens* (w/ Terry Pratchett; Gollancz/Workman, 1990, US Berkeley paperback, 1992); *Now We Are Sick* (edited w/ Stephen Jones; DreamHaven Books, 1991).

SHORT FICTION: "Webs" in *More Tales From the Forbidden Planet* (Titan, 1990); "Foreign Parts" in *Woods Without Pictures* (Arcane/Eclipse, 1990; corrected version published in *Fantasy Tales v. 2*, #3, Spring 1991); poem "Cold Colors" in *Midnight Graffiti #6* (1991).

MICHAEL ZULLI

The Piano Blues 1-25 (collected with Stephen Murphy, 1986-present, Aardvark One Int'l/Mirage/self-published; collected as *The Piano Blues Book One: Watch That Man* (issues #1-12, 1988); *The Piano Blues Book Two: Sense of Doubt* (issues #13-19, 1989); plus mini-comic in *Mirage* (Mirage, 1989); *Taboo* 2-5 (SpiderBaby, 1989-present); *Language Master Ninja Turtles #31* (with Stephen Murphy), 35, 37 (Mirage, 1990-91); *Shell Shock #1,2* (Mirage, 1990); *Sandman #13* (written by Neil Gaiman; DC Comics, 1990); *Newsies* (Tundra Sketchbook Series v. 3; Tundra, 1991). Unpublished: "Moaning of the Magician", intended for DC Comics' *Swoosh* #108 (written by Rick Veitch; 1989).

The 16-page *Sweeney Todd* 'Penny Dreadful' was not pre-order greenware with the June 1992 issue of *Taboo*. It is out of print. Do not write the publishers for copies; copies may, however, still be available in the collector's market.



SIRENUS TODD

The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

PROLOGUE

SIRIUS, HIS TROUBLES WITH WOMEN, A FOLLY, CHOCOLATS AND
PIRE, THE MULLBERRY TREE, GETTING LOST IN FALLING LEAF,
SIMPLE PEARL, CHINESE PEACOCK TEACHERS, STAINS, GOING TO
AMERICA, BEWARE FALLING MASONRY.

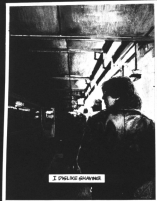
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TRAVELLING INTO LONDON, FEELING
SHAVED, MY FACE FEELS AS SMOOTH,
TIGHT, ALIEN.

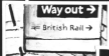


I DON'T LIKE SHAVED.



THE ACT ITSELF OFTEN SEEMS TO TAKE ON THE QUALITY OF RITUAL, OR OF SACRIFICE.

WIT, GOMP, BASH, LATHER, A PLASTIC END FOR THE FIRST AGONY ON THE MOUNT OF THE STUBBLE. BASH AGAIN, LATHER. A TANN-BLADED DREAMER FOR THE SECOND. SMOOTHED DOWN—SOMETHING, LIKE TODAY, EVEN A THIRD SHAVE. BASH, AND OY!



I TRY TO SHAVE ONLY ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK.



AFTER SHAVING THERE'S ALWAYS A PERIOD OF A FEW HOURS DURING WHICH I FEEL LIKE SOME BODY ELSE—SOMEONE PINK AND PULVERISABLE, AND BRACK ROANDED. I FEEL LIKE A BOY AGAIN.



MY FATHER ONCE TOLD ME THAT HE HATED HAVING TO MAKE ME GET A HAIRCUT, WHEN I WAS LITTLE. I WOULD TURN INTO SOMEONE ELSE, HE SAID.





I DO NOT
REMEMBER
THIS.



I ONLY REMEMBER A
BARBER WHO TRIED TO
TELL ME TO GET
STILL AND NOT TO MOVE,
CUT THE TOP OF MY HAIR
WITH HIS SCISSORS, I
REMEMBER THE PAIN,
AND THE BURN, ALMOST
THICKLY WHY THE BLOOD
RAN DOWN THE SIDE
OF MY NECK.



PI LLIANA,
DID YOU FIND OUT
ABOUT IT?

GORTON,
I SPEAK TO
SOMEONE ON
THE TOWN
COUNCIL.





WE HEADED FOR JUNCTION 26 OF THE A66, SIXTEEN MILES NORTH OF THE CITY OF LONDON.

...SO SHE KNEW IN A MINUTE THAT HE'D ADVANCED ON UP THERE. HE HADN'T EVEN MADE THE BED IN THE STAFF ROOM. SOME LITTLE TWENTY-YEAR-OLD MODEL. SHE WAS FLOORED.

I MEAN, WHENEVER SHE'S HAD ME UP THERE, SHE ALWAYS MADE SURE THERE WASN'T A HOLE OUT OF PLACE. SHE'D HOODIE AND EVERYTHING. SHE'D WANT HONEYBREAD...

I DON'T THINK SHE WAS THAT UPSET BY HIM PROBABLY BECAUSE SHE WAS OFF. JUST THAT HE THINKS SHE'S STUPID ENOUGH NOT TO NOTICE.



BUT YOU'VE BEEN SLEEPING WITH HIM FOR ALMOST TWO YEARS, AND HE HADN'T NOTICED THAT?



HANG ON. WHAT WAS THAT JUNCTION WE JUST PASSED?



I DUNNO. I'LL CHECK THE MAP.

JUNCTION 25. *Flashed*.



WE HAD TO GO A FEW MORE MILES ACROSS COUNTRY TO JUNCTION 26. TURN AROUND AND COME BACK.





"TEMPLE BAR, WHY WAS IT SO IMPORTANT?"

"IT WAS AT THE ENTRANCE TO FLEET STREET -- PROBABLY ORIGINALLY DESIGNED BY THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

"IT BECAME AS A CHAIN BETWEEN TWO MEDIEVAL PORTS, THEN IN 1580 THAT WAS REPLACED BY A GATE WITH A PRISON OVER IT.

"IT WAS DESIGNED FOR ANNE BOLINGBROKE'S CORONATION, THAT WAS ABOUT 1547. ITS LEADERSHIP PASSED THROUGH IT TO JOHN THORNTON FOR ENGLAND'S DELIVERANCE FROM THE SPANISH ARCADE.

in various tales. It was a narrow street of stone and stone
dramatic, and I myself have, in the last ten or so years, seen a
Hansard who, immediately they had disposed of Mr. Tait and
Miss Lewis—yes, it should be remembered, indeed in the
preparation of the play—interior, with unobscured windows, like

"IT SURVIVED THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON -- THAT WHOLE HALF OF FLEET STREET DID, THE FIRE STOPPED JUST BEFORE ST. DUNSTON'S CHURCH ..."

from the first place
where passage through
was restricted in shape,
it was found under the
"It was noted by the
"I found only the
St. Dunstons, which
and from them to West
could have done it had
was discovered, and
never lived as all-
and once have had
bottom of water
many years and the
"The Kalendar and
photograph, when I
registers and had a
distance, may read
the sake of which,
we made a protest

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BUT ANYWAY, CHRISTOPHER BROWN SAID THIS INCUBATION IN THE EARLY 1800S.



CAN YOU GIVE THEM? I NEED TO GET A SENSE OF SCALE FOR MICHAEL JULLI.

IT'S REALLY SMALL. IT'S WEIRD. IT LOOKED A LOT BIGGER ON THE OLD PRINTS. BUT THEN, IT WAS KIND OF HARD TO JUDGE SCALE.



THESE WERE STORED OVER THE TOP OF IT. CHILD'S BARK, THE FIRST BARK IN ENGLAND WENT TO USE IT TO SCORE RECORDS.



FOR THE SCOP? WELL, THESE SPEAK. IN 1684 THEY TOOK THE BODY OF SIR THOMAS ARBUTHNOT, CUT IT UP, BOILED IT IN SALT--THAT'S SO THE BIRDS WOULDN'T EAT IT, I THINK. NOT SURE AND THEY PUT IT ON THE TOP OF TEMPLE BAR.



FOR THE NEXT SIXTY YEARS, THOUGH, IT WAS JUST AHEAD. THEY'D PUT THE HEAD OF traitors and executed felons on there. I ONLY JUST FOUND OUT HOW THEY GOT THEM DOWN."



HOW DID THEY?



THEY DON'T. THEY'D JUSTICE AND EVENTUALLY FALL OFF, AND DOGS AND CHILDREN WOULD PLAY WITH THEM IN THE STREETS.



OH.



WE WOUND UP BOTH THE
ROLLS OF FILM, THEN WE
WALKED BACK UP TO THE
CAR PARK.

MIKE ORDERED A TOMATO SOUP!
I ORDERED A HAMBURGER.



ARE THERE ANY QUICK-
BOOKS OR ANYTHING WE
WERE JUST DOWN LOOKING
AT TEMPLE BAR...



THAT'S
NOT TEMPLE BAR,
LOVE.



NO?



TEMPLE BAR'S IN THOROLD'S
PARK, OVER THERE. NOT IN CEDAR
PARK. OF COURSE THEY WOULD
BE THE SAME PLACE, BUT NOW
THEY'RE THE ABC IN THE MIDDLE.



TEMPLE BAR'S
OUT THAT WAY OR
SO I'VE HEARD. I'VE
NEVER SEEN IT
MYSELF.



OH.



I'M STARVING, AND THE TERRIBLE
BURNING TASTES WONDERFUL. I
GIVE AWAY A BITE.

I KNOW
IT LOOKED
SMALL.

I DON'T MIND
IT PROLONGING THE
CHASE.

YEAH, THAT ONE
DEFINITELY A POLLY. IT
GIVE GO HERE. HEY--
THERE'S AN OLD MULBERRY
TREE HERE. CAN YOU
GO AND GET IT?





THERE ARE MULBERRY TREES IN ROUNTAIN COURT, DOWN IN FLEET STREET, NEAR THE TEMPLE.

REALLY OLD ONES-- OLDER THAN THIS-- GO OLD THEY LOOK ALMOST UNCEGURAL WHEN THE MULBERRIES FALL ITS LIKE THE FLOOR IS PAVED WITH BLOOD!

I TASTE A MULBERRY DIRT AND RED

YOU LOOKING FOR ANYTHING?

TEMPLE BAR.

ITS OVER THERE SOMEWHERE, IN THE WOODS!

THEY CLOSED THAT ROAD DOWN YESTERDAY OTHERWISE YOU COULD DRIVE STRAIGHT ACROSS.

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN IT?

CAN'T SAY I EVER HAVE. MAN CAME UP HERE TO SEE IT, THROUGH THE GATE IT WAS THERE. SAID THEY MAY MOVE IT BACK TO LONDON.





IT GAVE ME THE PLACE WAS OWNED BY JAMES THE FIRST. IT GAVE HE HAD AN ORGY HERE WITH KING CHRISTIAN OF DENMARK.



I SAID SOMEWHERE THAT HIS ENIGMA WAS TOO BIG FOR HIS MOUTH.



IF YOU WERE A BLOWN UP TO SCHOOL ON YOUR CHAIRS AND GROPE YOU.



AND HIS PERSONAL EATING AND GROOMING HAS HIS WEIR DENIED FOR THEIR BEHOLDINGNESS AT A TIME WHEN PEOPLE ONLY BATHED A COUPLE OF TIMES A YEAR...







IT'S PROBABLY
A GOOD THING THAT
WE'RE OUT OF FLIN.
THE LIGHTS AREN'T
PRETTY FAR.

DO YOU THINK
WE'RE GOING THE
RIGHT WAY?

DUHNO.



WE'VE GOT TO FIND IT
TODAY. I MEAN, SUNDAY
IS AMERICA TOMORROW...

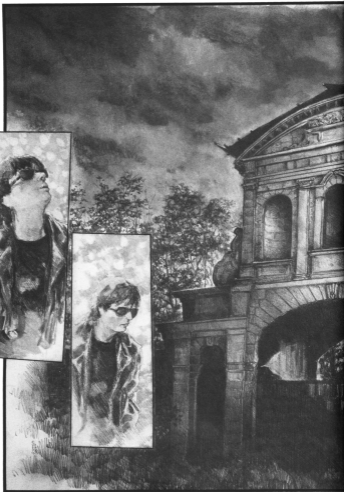


I SHOULDN'T
HAVE LEFT IT
SO LATE.



I WONDER
IF WE'LL KNOW
IT WHEN WE
SEE IT...







MIKE CLIMBED OVER THE FENCE. HE CIRCLED THE BUILDING FROM A DISTANCE, EXAMINING THE INNER BARBED-WIRE FENCE.



WE'RE NOT GOING TO GET IN.

NO.

WHY DID THEY BRING IT UP HERE, THEN?



"THEY WERE RUNNING FLINT STREET IN '60-- BACK WHEN THEY BUILT THE LAW COURTS. THEN THEY KNOCKED IT DOWN AND LEFT IT IN A WIND-UP PARKING LOT FOR TEN YEARS."

"THE PLACE BOUGHT IT AS A BAIT-HOUSE."

"WHAT BAIT ARE ORIGINAL?"



JUST THE ARCH THE REST OF IT MUST HAVE BEEN A BAIT-HOUSE WHEN THEY BUILT IT AS A BAIT-HOUSE.





I PICKED A HANDFUL OF ELDER-BERRIES, THEY TASTED OF NOTHING AND AUTUMN, AND SOAKED MY HANDS BLACK.



WELL, SOME PEOPLE MUST HAVE GOT BY OVER THE YEARS.



HANG ON, LOCK AT THESE...



THEY'RE BEAUTIFUL...



BUT THAT'S REALLY NERD! I WONDER HOW THEY GOT HERE.



I'VE DONE THEM BEFORE.



I FEEL SCARED, ITS HISTORY OUT OF CONTEXT, THERE'S NOTHING HERE TO TELL US WHAT IT IS -- NO NAME, "SOMEONE" MADE, BUILT BY CHRISTOPHER BROWN IN 1987... "SO SOMEONE IT SAID AND HARMLESS.



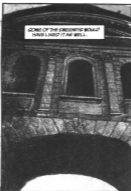
INSTEAD ITS SITTING IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE LIKE AN UNEXPLODED BOMB.







STILL, THERE'S A GREAT
IRONY THERE THAT THE
TEMPLARS WOULD HAVE
APPRECIATED.



COME OF THE SWISS WOULD
HAVE LIKED IT AS WELL.



AUTUMN
TWILIGHT

I CAN FEEL THE
KISS IN THE BACK
OF MY THROAT.



MIKE CONTINUES TO TALK AS WE
WALK BACK DOWN THE MUSTY PATH
THROUGH THE TWILIGHT WOODS.



JUST I THINK ABOUT (MIKE'S)



AND ABOUT MR. LOWETT,

ABOUT THE JOURNALIST

AND THE PLAY.



AND THE SACRIFICE ...

