

101 Fiction

Issue 11

March 2016

Put your tray tables in the upright and locked position; fasten your seatbelts and fix your goggles; cabin crew to launch stations... 101 Fiction is taking to the air.

Every tiny one hundred word slice of twenty-first century fiction in this issue takes place off the ground in one way or another. Whether fully airborne, struggling against gravity just enough to get off the ground, leaping from point to point, or in full-on freefall.

This in-flight entertainment is first class, atmospheric stuff, and the sky is (literally) the limit. There's horror of course, horror is one of our support pillars (the ancient cracked onyx one that always sweats a viscous black ooze), but the issue is perhaps, appropriately, a little lighter than usual, though no less impactful. There's gods and monsters, screaming, bombing and murder (oh my), but there's humanity too, philosophy, hope and love.

Strap yourself in, forget parachutes and crash helmets, open your mind and prepare for lift off.

Welcome to issue 11.

Read. Absorb. Enjoy.

Disappointment

by Ricardo Patriarca

My mother thinks of me as a failure, unable to traverse the sky with the raging speeds she does. On mornings that we roam the heavens, I'm always miles behind.

Her talons are as sharp as diamond. Her wings wider and more stunning than any eagle's. Her jade-green eyes can see prey a thousand mountains away. She has lived many eons, yet time only makes her stronger, bolder. Age agrees with her, my mother.

You disappoint me child, she always says. Just like your father.

Will she be so disappointed when she feels the poison burn deep through her veins?

Author bio: Ricardo Patriarca is a writer from Manila, Philippines. His work has been published at the Philippine Daily Inquirer. He writes short stories and poems during his free time. He is 20 years old.

Valkyrie

by Kit Hamada

Mage Hellebore spoke of birds that lay their eggs in Heaven: the younglings hatch as they plummet earthwards.

I was practising scrying in the high tower when I saw the iridescent black egg drop from the sky.

Even if it began to hatch now, it would be too late. I cast a keep-safe spell and prayed that it took. I was an apprentice still.

The egg lay at the base of the tower, miraculously intact. As I held it, it rocked and crackled; the monster began to emerge.

Too late, I remembered how the story ends: in fire and destruction.

Author bio: Part-time writer; full-time dog walking robot.

Dive

by John Xero

I drop through sheets of hazy cloud, exhilarated.

Part of me grows alarmed as I drift off-mark, but with a tweak of my fins I am on course again, happiness flowing through my circuits: reward.

Air surges by me. Do I surge through it?

I wasn't built for semantics.

I cost considerably more than any of my antecedents. I am a scalpel to their crude club. Or am I surgeon to their caveman?

Irrelevant, I suppose. My time is brief.

I rush to meet destiny, joyous, pregnant with my lethal payload. I would sing, if I could.

Author bio: John Xero believes in the explosive power of words, and knows a small word count can carry a massive payload.

Orbital platform: xeroverse.com

Propaganda: [@xeroverse](https://twitter.com/xeroverse)

Recon: [instagram.com/johnxero](https://www.instagram.com/johnxero)

Wireless

by Margaret McGoverne

He entered the grid site at dusk; high-voltage cables whined as his shadow passed below.

He wrenched a lever; the air was alive and hungry, defying the insulators that deterred the ignorant and the desperate.

Circuit breakers cracked like thunder as power surged in mindless spasms.

Then: jump!

Lightning harnessed, arcing ropes of eternity leapt skywards, supersonic screams marking their path.

The receiver glowed, an ultraviolet orb of light and gas, suddenly alive.

He had transmitted electricity wirelessly! They had said it couldn't be done! Where were those naysayers now? Where were they, and why was the orb still screaming?

Author bio: Margaret McGoverne is currently writing her first full length novel, while being distracted by short stories, flash fiction and her blog about all things writing. <http://margaretmcgoverne.com/>

Pulped

by Shannon Bell

Tegan sat on the highest branch, hugged the trunk and pressed her cheek to the bark.

“I hate him.” She whispered over and over, a mantra for her broken heart. Her tears and her words seeped into the tree. Its sap pulsed with the power of her contempt.

Kyle walked along the garden path.

“Hate him.”

The tree reached down, seized him, threw him in the air.

Tegan stared at Kyle’s body, limp and lifeless in the upper branches. “Oh,” she smiled, “thank you, tree.”

The tree shuddered, its leaves shook as ridges of bark stretched into a grotesque smile.

Author bio: Shannon Bell is addicted to words. You will find him madly writing away in the spare time he has available between holding down a full-time job, being part of a dysfunctional family and looking after his attention seeking dog.

Kindness

by Daniel Gooding

Terry held on grimly to his wife as the plane continued its seemingly never-ending descent. With all the chaos around them, screaming women clinging to red-faced children and slumped men in business suits weeping incoherently into cell phones, nobody seemed to notice Terry, or his violently trembling wife.

Once the tremors ceased, he released his hands from her throat. It was a kindness really. That had always been one of her favourite refrains: “You really should try and be kinder to yourself Terry!”

Leaning back in his seat, he sighed contentedly. The last minutes of his life were his own.

Author bio: Daniel Gooding was born in 1984, and his flash fiction has appeared previously in '101 Fiction', as well as 'The Legendary' and '101 Words'. His short story 'Crow Magnum Xix' is featured in the upcoming anthology 'Startling Sci-Fi: New Tales of the Beyond' published by New Lit Salon Press, and he occasionally blogs about books for 'The Guardian'. He currently lives in Bath, UK.

Freedom

by Ricardo Patriarca

“No more words. I’m leaving and there’s nothing you can do to stop me.” Martha said, her suitcase beside her. She and her mother had been arguing for almost three hours now.

“And what are you going to do there, huh?” her mother said. “You won’t survive a day.”

“How would you know? You never tried! You let Papa lock you up here all your life! I don’t want to be like you! I’m going. Now, before he comes back.”

She slammed the front door behind her. Three steps and she was off the cloud, plummeting towards her new life.

Author bio: Ricardo Patriarca is a writer from Manila, Philippines. His work has been published at the Philippine Daily Inquirer. He writes short stories and poems during his free time. He is 20 years old.

Kite

by Wendy Steele

The rain has stopped. I ruffle my rufous body and preen my black-tipped wings. Far above, my parents call.

The undulating land below me is colour-washed with golden hues as the giant orb retakes its place in the blue of eternity and I fly. Never before have I harnessed the air for my pleasure and I call my delight as I dive and climb. I laugh at the creatures in miniature below me. It's all wind to them.

A generous updraught holds me in glorious suspension until a glance of my wing sends me soaring and the spiral dance begins.

Author bio: Wendy Steele lives on a hillside in Wales with her partner and cats. Following training in belly dance and writing, she has published novels and novellas in the magical realism genre and teaches ATS® Belly Dance. Renovating her Grade II listed farmhouse and reading fill the rest of her time. www.wendysteele.com

Buoyancy

by Sally Basmajian

Before we parted, she smiled and said she loved me. Bubbles of happiness began to form, filling me with intoxicating lightness. From gut to extremities I felt uplifted and joyful.

But why was I floating over the park where the two of us had embraced? Had love made me gravity-defiant? I should have panicked over my weightlessness, but I couldn't stop thinking about her hair, her scent, her lips. And, the more I thought of her, the higher I rose.

Later, she came back to meet me. From on high, I saw her shoulders slump as I failed to appear.

Author bio: Sally Basmajian is an executive escapee from the corporate world of broadcasting. She has been writing for almost two years, dabbling mostly in fiction and memoir pieces. In 2015 she won prizes in the Rising Spirits Awards and SQ Mag's Story Quest contest, and had stories pop up in places such as Psychology Tomorrow and the UnCommon Bodies anthology.

Onwards

by Stephanie Hutton

Being such a good girl, the children had not questioned it when Amy silently took each of their balloons, wrapping them around her forearms. Before the memorial speech had finished, she floated upwards – bound for heaven, or at least the Mainland. Amy soared with a heart turned light as chocolate mousse. Kicking off her sandals, she wiggled her toes just for the feeling of it. Green turned to blue, blue, blue below. Maybe she didn't need anyone after all?

A family of honking geese flew by, each keeping its place. Then land ahead – and the possibility of a new mummy.

Author bio: Clinical Psychologist with an interest in flash fiction and the therapeutic value of creative writing.

@tiredpsych

Monsters

by John Xero

Alma watches me calmly, her brown eyes so serious.

The air outside roars like a monster, a thousand monsters, barely muted by the metal cylinder we ride downwards to our dooms.

“Is this where we die?” she asks.

So unafraid.

There was chaos at first, a mad tumble settling to a somehow stable plummet. There were wings too, before that first monstrous roar.

Her calmness envelopes me.

“Yes,” I reply, “I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t be,” she says. “Death is a doorway. You saved me once. Now let me save you.”

So earnest.

And when the final roar comes... so bright.

Author bio: The once and future bookseller, John Xero is, was, and will always be in the business of stories. And where would stories be without monsters... and hope?

He should update his blog more: xeroverse.com

Or even tweet once in a while: [@xeroverse](https://twitter.com/xeroverse)

Thanks for reading.

All work published in this issue of 101 Fiction and on 101fiction.com is copyright of the individual authors. Please do not reproduce without permission.