

101 Fiction

Issue 12

June 2016

Prep the subs, check your oxygen, take a deep breath (those of you without gills), and prepare to dive dive dive! Welcome to issue twelve, 101 Fiction's underwater adventure.

It's not all deep sea, but there is something distinctly damp about each of these one hundred word wonders and if they stretch the theme a little here and there then it's because the story itself was simply too good to pass up. Every one of them is a sunken treasure just waiting to be discovered.

We do love our myths and they're here in abundance, old and new, gods and monsters, in twisting tales to tantalise and suggest and seduce you deeper into their watery worlds. Peer through the shimmering surface and see glimpses of futures, of distant oceans and sunken towns. And never dismiss the danger of drowning... the stories may be small but they have depths, hidden currents, and tides that can turn with nary a tip off.

As a quarterly we're three years in, at the end of our third cycle of themes. Each issue lands with a splash and this one is no exception. Read and re-read; let the ripples spread through your mind.

Absorb.

Enjoy.

Invitation

by Stephanie Hutton

Something broke the natural stillness of the pond. She stirred; eyes unused to opening. Someone was there. At long, long last. The rippling surface distorted the visitor's face. A glimmer of golden hair. A playful laugh that had never been soured by betrayal. As the water calmed, she saw almost her double – a young girl in a gingham dress, teasing the water with a willow branch. Hope tingled her fingers. She craved closeness; an ally in this cold lonely world. Reaching up her withered arm towards the surface, she beckoned: come now, come to me, join me in the water.

Author bio: Clinical Psychologist and writer in the UK

<http://stephaniehutton.com>

@tiredpsych

Maid

by John Xero

Sylvie pulled the kelp tight about herself, denying the playful tide's tugging fingers. She'd been dallying with the squid boys again.

"Water's mighty warm, Sylvie. Why you gotta swaddle yourself so?"

"Jus' feel like being contained, mama. Don't wanna dissipate into the bay."

"Now I swear you musta got that strange thinking from your other mam." She shook her head, golden hair drifting into a soft glowing halo. "You're a queer sort of 'maid, young 'un."

Not so young. Not too young to feel that itch, or have to hide the sucker marks those shameless squid boys liked to leave.

Author bio: John Xero almost certainly got his strange thinking from his mam.

Short thoughts: @xeroverse

Longer ponders: xeroverse.com

Regeneration

by R.S. Bohn

Toes hunted through muck, finding a sharp curve and lifting the shell to the basket slung from her neck.

No arms don't mean no work, her dad said. Clams need digging. If her eyes fell out and got ate up by fish, he'd probably say she don't need eyes, neither.

Her toes rubbed something rough, like a cat's tongue. She jerked when it moved, wrapping around her foot. She lifted her knee.

A starfish.

Sharp pain tore up her spine, exploding from her shoulders. The starfish dropped away. She slapped at it with a perfect, coral-coloured pair of pointed arms.

Author bio: R.S. Bohn lives on one side of a moat and talks to crocodiles. Carries a trident everywhere. Drinks navy-strength rum. Has failed 'Talk Like a Pirate Day' six years running.

Desertification

by Amanda Martin Sandino

Me and June, we go out to the ocean with our raw anger. Take the chaos out to sea. Not that it's much of an ocean adventure. Even the whales want to escape it, throwing themselves onto the land as we throw ourselves into the waters.

It spits, ejaculating bile: broken bottles, hypodermic needles, the occasional missing person, bloated, nibbled, and blue.

It's the same though: our ocean, the briny deep, Neptune's domain.

When we get a mind to drown ourselves here, we end up back on the beach.

And still, at night our efforts dry away with children's sandcastles.

Author bio: Amanda Martin Sandino is a Literature doctoral student at UC San Diego.

selFISH

by Shannon Bell

"Psst, hey you. Yeah that's right, you. Fuck me, enough is enough mate. Look at this dump. A glass bowl and some sand; like, hello, boring. Some decorations would be nice."

This can't be real.

"And while you're at it, how about supplying some female company. It gets lonely in here and I have needs too you know."

I must be hallucinating.

"Are you listening to me? Is the brain not processing what the eyes are seeing? And they call humans the most intelligent species!"

Lips pursed in annoyance, fin tapping the glass impatiently, my goldfish is talking to me.

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.

AVI

by Voima Oy

Under the ice of Enceladus, there is an ocean. What life might live there, with no need of the sun?

We built a robot named AVI (Autonomous Visual Interface). She would go where humans could not. We thought there was no fear in AVI, or wonderment, no capacity for loneliness or love.

AVI saw things beyond our visual spectrum, as she swam in the cold and black. She sent back images of auroras, tentacled lightning, bridges not designed for us.

We saw the flickering of enormous creatures. AVI followed them into the darkness, toward the lights of their distant cities.

Author bio: Voima Oy lives on the Western rim of Chicago, near the expressway and the Blue Line trains. Her writing has appeared in Visual Verse, Paragraph Planet and Unbroken Journal. Follow her on Twitter, too – @voimaoy.

Pressure

by John Xero

"I can't stand it," Carmen muttered.

Joel stroked her hair, silver since birth, only now suiting her age.

"Can't stand what, mother?"

"You can't feel it? Restricting us. Crushing us. We can't be everything we ought to; we can't be *great* anymore, only ordinary."

He sighed. This again. "Society has to be controlled. We're so few and the balance so fine. Roles must be assigned, resources rationed."

"Symptoms. Just Symptoms. It's the water, Joel. Thousands of tons pressing down on the dome, on us. We need open skies, freedom."

"They say the skies are black with poisons."

"So they do."

Author bio: John Xero firmly believes you shouldn't believe everything you are told, and that everyone needs open skies if they are to ever fly.

Little white lies: @xeroverse

Big lies, aka 'stories': xeroverse.com

Seepier

by Daniel Gooding

A red cloud spread across the sky, blotting out the picturesque image of the farmstead occupying the lower half of the picture. Robert plunged his hand into the tray without thinking, causing the displaced liquid to wash over the table; the rotten-egg odour was growing into something much more ominous, like the stench of dead fish.

Chemicals continued to splash out of the tray, belching out now in foul-smelling gluts of fluid. Robert stepped back as more water began to pour out through cracks in the walls and ceiling, and squid-like tentacles slopped over the edge of the developing tray...

Author bio: Daniel Gooding was born in 1984, and his flash fiction has appeared twice 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.

Glaucus

by Margaret McGoverne

“Tunnel construction began in 1825...” The guide dripped factoids; she concentrated on her footing. The floor was wet; the curved brick walls sweated feverishly. In overalls, harness and boots she waded rather than walked.

“Sump pumps, groundwater, River Lea...”

All tributaries feed the Thames; bridged by Romans, and before them Pytheas had sailed to misty fabled Britannia, bringing who knows what disaffected gods with him...

“What’s this tunnel called?” she asked.

A gurgling, submerged reply: “Glaucus Street.”

Wasn’t Glaucus a Greek God? And what had risen up ahead, from dark, primordial waters? Fins and tail encircled her, yearning anew.

“Scylla...”

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://margaretmcgoeverne.com/>

Maturity

by Sara Cordair

Krikri should've been excited, since it was initiation day. Still, she couldn't suppress the sensation of minnows in her stomach. She swam harder, hoping the strain would ease the anxiety. It just got her there sooner. The others watched as she hoisted her upper-body onto the rocks, opened her mouth and sang. A ship slammed into the island. A sailor stumbled out of the wreckage and fell prostrate before her. She grabbed him by the throat, diving into the water. He opened his mouth to scream. She released him. The other sirens shunned her. Her fins morphed into legs.

Author bio: Sara Codair writes because her brain is overcrowded with stories. If she doesn't get them out, she fears her head will explode. When she isn't making things up, she is either teaching college students how to write essays, digging in her garden or just enjoying the beauty of nature. Her short stories have appeared in or are forthcoming from Women on Writing, Foliate Oak, Centum Press, Sick Lit Magazine, and Mash Stories. You can find her online at <https://saracodair.com/>.

Three

by Helen Dring

Irma counts to ten before she feels the rough of Mansky's hand against her neck.

"Three minutes," he whispers, sour breath warm at her ear.

She plunges into the cold, eyes shut. The water flattens against her face, firm like clear cold plastic, like the doors she pressed her face to in her mother's house.

Each second rings in her ears, blood pumping. She counts. One, two, a bubble of a breath. Three, four, bubble.

This is meant to drown people. She remembers Mansky's harsh voice: *Survive and you can be one of us.*

She breathes, counts, thinks of Mansky.

Author bio: Helen Dring teaches and writes in Liverpool, UK. She likes real (scary) fairy tales and children's ghost stories. Find her on Twitter @dringhelen and at www.helendring.co.uk

Hypothermia

by Christopher L. Malone

He couldn't see her, save for the blue flashes of lightning illuminating her hugged knees, goose fleshed arms, and quivering lips.

A pop-up storm surprised them with torrents of rain and wind; rough currents threw them overboard with no life jackets to speak of. Their wet cotton clothing sucked the heat from their bones. He floundered for her body and pressed his torso against her own. He meant to warm her with the fire of his waning spirit, but the grey waters lapped over them; the cold seized their bodies before the undertow finally claimed them for a river's grave.

Author bio: I am a Maryland native, English teacher, and aspiring writer with hopes of one day completing a novel. You can view my poetry for free at <http://clmalone84.wordpress.com/>

Reservoir

by D. D. Syrdal

The water rushed in when the last townspeople had gone, filling the valley, covering houses, schools, churches. Cemeteries. No longer could families tend the graves of loved ones buried there.

Not that they stayed buried.

As the water sloshed and gurgled over the graves, it lifted away the dirt, releasing the bones, letting them rise in surprise. Dancing skeletons swirled and eddied, unseen, unheard. Still dressed in their burial clothes, their bones collided and intertwined. No one to see them except the fish.

Every Sunday the bell in the not quite submerged church tower is rung by some unseen hand.

Author bio: D. D. Syrdal grew up in a 200-year-old, allegedly haunted farmhouse in Massachusetts. She now calls Oregon home, where her daydreams and nightmares play out in stories about vampires, demons, and witches. She blogs at fillingspaces.wordpress.com and can be found on Twitter @ddsyrdal

Unlucky

by R.S. Bohn

For twelve hours, Celia stood underwater in the frozen veggies aisle at Kroger. That's what happens when you die during a great flood, the whole world washed away, and you didn't make it to the ship on time. Celia wouldn't have won the last-minute lottery, anyway, she tells herself as a door opens and bagged peas go floating out, two by two.

A hundred other souls haunt this place, but none seem to notice their drowned bodies. They're still shopping for soup and chips. Leaving her own body behind, tethered to its trolley, she drifts upwards into a new sea.

Author bio: R.S. Bohn lives on one side of a moat and talks to crocodiles. Carries a trident everywhere. Drinks navy-strength rum. Has failed 'Talk Like a Pirate Day' six years running.

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.