

101 Fiction

Issue 13

Hallowe'en 2016

Welcome one and all – goblin, faerie and ghoul – to our Hallowe'en special. You have the house's permission to enter. Cross the threshold but beware, there are scarier things than you in this lair.

We have thirteen stories to chill and thrill you, inspired in some way by that unlucky-for-some number, or that particular night of year, All Hallows' Eve, when the veil between realms is stretched thin, when humans become other, hide inside themselves, and demons step free, cavorting amongst us unknown for a night. Do you dare remove the mask of the man dancing in front of you? What if it were not a mask at all?

We've got spirits, devils, demons and witches, murderers and... yoga? Yes, yoga. Dare you dally at the pumpkin parade, four twisted tales to ensure you never look at that plump orange gourd the same way again? Be warned, your winding path back to reality takes you through twisted nightmare landscapes and throws you out the other side of Allhallowtide, dishevelled and shaken, with a tribute to that great icon of horror, HP.

Check behind the sofa. Check under the bed. Check the mirror, is that you or your mask?

Get comfortable. Settle in for our Horrific Hallowe'en special.

Read. Absorb. Be afraid.

Unsuspected

by Angela J. Maher

One night a year, the door cracks open and I can walk among you, unsuspected. I receive the admiring looks I deserve, with squeals of delight instead of fear. I can show my face without the threat of attack. I can unleash my voice and hide my truth in your lies.

One night a year, I belong. My path upon the Earth is accepted, expected. Striding free, stretching my muscles, I am a nightmare hiding in the middle of your fantasy. My treat is to trick you into thinking I am a hollow Halloween effigy. You have given me life.

Author bio: Angela is a SAHM, science graduate, bibliophile and writer. Based in Hobart (Australia), she is a member of the Tasmanian Writers Centre and the Australian Horror Writers Association, as well as Fiction Writers Group on Facebook. She can be found on Facebook and Twitter, and her website is angelajmaher.com

Sweet

by Voima Oy

This time of year when the light is sharp and the dark comes early there is a thinning of the veil between the worlds. It shimmers, a spider web caught for a moment in the porch light. A plastic bag becomes a ghost.

All their houses are dressed up for Halloween. They give candy to appease the dead.

I still keep his silver ring. If I hold it close and speak his name we will dance together tonight.

I will hear him whispering sweet words in my ear as the children shriek, "Stay away. Stay away from the witch house!"

Author bio: Voima Oy lives on the western rim of Chicago, near the expressway and the Blue Line trains. Her writing can be found online at Paragraph Planet, Visual Verse, 101 Fiction, Sick Lit and Unbroken Journal. Follow her on Twitter, too – @voimaoy

Devils

by John Xero

“Got devils in you, don’tcha, boy?”

Only time my pa showed me anything but contempt.

I fled his fits and fists not long after, but time came I found myself back where I started, knocking on my own front door.

“Ain’t no treats here,” he snarled at my diminutive companions, “and tricks’ll only bring my belt to your backsides.”

Rheumy eyes peered at me. “I know you?”

“Truth be told, don’t think you ever did. Once said I had devils in me. Well, I got them out.”

The imps grinned as they scrambled forwards, dragging him inside, ushering me home.

Author bio: John Xero thinks everyone has devils in them, angels too. The trick is finding the balance. Face them, shake their hands, know them, own them.

Little words: @xeroverse

Bigger words: xeroverse.com

Skin

by Devon R. Widmer

“Sophie?”

Sophie thumbed the hem of her dress awkwardly. She barely knew her great aunt Muriel, yet the woman, now on her deathbed, had insisted on a private visit.

“Come, lovely Sophie. I’ve a present for you, one passed down from old to young.”

Muriel reached back to the base of her skull and pulled. Wrinkled skin peeled easily away from the bone.

Sophie opened her mouth to scream but aged fingers held her tongue, prying her jaws open.

The funeral was the following day. While others cried, Sophie hid her smile, fingers pressed to the base of her skull.

Author bio: Devon R. Widmer, a graduate student in chemistry, hopes everyone remains vigilant for demons in human costumes this Halloween.

Game

by Madeline Mora-Summonte

Tonight's contest is not for children. It's from a time, a place, best not spoken of. Like Sadie herself.

The adults stare at their names carved into the tree, the marks ragged and hungry, made not by blade but bone. Sadie grins. Her voice creaks as she counts off thirteen, one for each finger.

The players run, hide while the woods whisper, disturbed.

Sadie's black wings unfurl, slashing the dark. The hump of her spine splits open, birthing teeth, tongue.

The survivors will stumble home, shaking, weeping. The rest will have only their bones sent back.

Picked clean, of course.

*Author bio: Madeline Mora-Summonte (<http://madelinemora-summonte.blogspot.com/>) is a writer, a reader, a beach-comber and a tortoise-owner. She is the author of the flash fiction collections, *The People We Used to Be* (<https://www.amazon.com/People-We-Used-Collection-ebook/dp/B00G7QXOKO/>) and *Garden of Lost Souls* (<https://www.amazon.com/Garden-Lost-Souls-Collection-Fiction-ebook/dp/B014AMJYM8/>).*

Downward

by Adam Golub

The yoga studio is empty on Hallowe'en.

There is a new instructor. She wears a red unitard and a glitter mesh top hat.

“Welcome to Bikram.”

The room feels hotter than usual.

“Do you have any pain?”

I shake my head, lying.

She begins with corpse pose.

“Breathe.”

I inhale. I'm already sweltering.

Before I can exhale, she has pinned my arms to the mat.

“Release the ghosts.”

I struggle. She presses her mouth to mine and sucks the air from my lungs until I am still.

She stands up and bows as my body sinks into the burning floor.

Author bio: Adam Golub is an American Studies professor who teaches courses on literature, childhood, popular culture, and monsters at Cal State Fullerton. His creative work has appeared in The Sirens Call and is forthcoming in The Bookends Review. His nonfiction writing has been published in Film and History, Anthropology Now, American Quarterly, and elsewhere. He is co-editor of a book of essays on teaching monsters, forthcoming from McFarland in 2017. Twitter: @adamgolub

Lantern

by Natalie Prado

“Drat,” Marjorie said, as the blade from the cheap supermarket carving kit slipped and bent. She wiped her sticky hands down the front of her paisley apron, probably ruining it.

The teeth were always the problem. Marjorie was fine with slicing the top and scooping the insides out with her wooden spoon, but she had always struggled with detail work.

She sighed and, abandoning the blade, reached over to the pair of pliers instead. She clamped them down on the recalcitrant lower tooth and, with a firm grip and a grunt of effort, managed to pry it from the jawbone.

Author bio: Natalie Prado lives in Baltimore and is bad at finishing things. You can follow her at @mightbenatalie

Carving

by Christopher Malone

“The first thing to do is to cut the top off and pull out the innards. The top is thick, so you’ll have to plunge downward with force.”

He pantomimed with his fist coming down like a hammer, stopping the blade forcefully in mid-air.

“Then, when it’s time to display your artistry, remember to be decisive. Once you make a cut, you can’t go backward. Commit – don’t hesitate. You’ll have cleaner strokes that way.”

He handed me the knife and sat me in front of the pumpkin.

“You’ll see, son,” he said. “It’s no different than carving up a man.”

Author bio: Christopher Malone is a Maryland native who teaches English and plays music, in addition to writing. His work has been featured by 101 Fiction, The Dark City Crime and Mystery Magazine, and Cicatrix Publishing. His poetry can be read on his blog at <http://clmalone84.wordpress.com/>

Smile

by TM Upchurch

The pumpkin stares ahead, eyes burning. 'This is your night,' I say, 'so smile.' There's a brief flicker. I gave this one a wide mouth.

Pumpkins never last; they're designed to rot. Tonight the eyes will succumb to the cold. Tomorrow, the skin will crumple and drop; juices will trickle through the cracks and pool where the neck might have been. The cheeks beneath the eyes are already wet and waxen. I scrape them with a knife still sticky from carving, and dry it on my leg.

I lean in, press my skin close, and whisper, 'Try to stay pretty.'

Author bio: TM Upchurch writes fiction at www.tmupchurch.com and tweets as @tmupchurch

Precautions

by Shenoa Carroll-Bradd

If you must travel the haunted woods, bring a pumpkin with you.

Stick to the path, no matter how pretty the foxfire nor how clearly you hear someone calling your name.

If you sense a presence behind you, don't look. Don't run. This is what prey does.

Stay calm. Carve your pumpkin.

Before the chill reaches you, strike a light.

Carry your lantern backward on your shoulder, glaring fire behind you.

The forest won't move if it feels watched.

Once home, set the lantern by your gate to discourage followers.

The sun should rise before your sentry fades.

Good luck.

Author bio: I like to write in just about every genre, but my favourites are horror and fantasy.

My author homepage is www.sbcfiction.net and I can also be found on twitter @ShenoaSays

Opus

by Becky Spence

Pencil lines. Black on white. A landscape drawing, countryside. Hills rolling, charcoal shadows, church spire and gnarled trees. This was his canvas.

He dipped the feather. Quill dripping crimson red, his red. Deft lines, shapes forming. Contorted visions, demons crying. His was a wicked smile, bone teeth grinning.

Hand gripping, bones aching. Page bleeding nightmare dreams. Wisps of darkness in the sunset. Carving through what once was peaceful. Churning up the hallowed grounds.

A still life waiting. Ready for the chaos. Ready for this fateful night.

He etched the final line. Blood gleamed, screams echoed. His artwork crawled to life.

Author bio: Stories are my passion and I love reading and writing. I'm lucky enough to have been published a few times in flash fiction and poetry anthologies. I enjoy taking part with prompts on twitter too.

@bex_spence

<http://eveningscribbles.wordpress.com/>

Burning

by John Xero

On the eve before All Hallows' Day, while false demons walked city streets, I watched the black moons rise. Thirteen malignant orbs lifting from inky waters, dragging the ocean with them.

I felt their bleak gravity tug at my soul, ethereal fingers grasping for my secret heart.

Come, they whispered, inviting me into their eternal night.

I confess I teetered, cold temptation planting kisses on my feverish brow, but I held.

I looked to the stars, the distant burning swords of faithful angels standing against the great darkness, and I knew I must not fall. We are too few already.

*Author bio: John Xero believes that anyone standing against the darkness is a star.
xeroverse.com | @xeroverse*

Between

by Margaret McGoverne

Howard Phillips was a lonely seeker of the unknown, of what is, and what is in-between. Metaphysics failing him, he embraced the occult.

Beginning on Halloween, his incantations lasted until dawn, then continued as the sun sank again.

The air thickened, then rent in two. Elemental waves sundered him, and he knew no more. But consciousness returned; his body lay discarded but he was there, in the spaces between!

And he was no longer alone.

Jostling, melding, a gelatinous, transparent whole, the essence of everything that had ever lived filled the air. Vigintillions screamed as midnight struck.

All Souls' Day.

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/>

Thanks for reading.

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