

101 Fiction

Issue 16

September 2017

Ready the prayer beads, crack open the hymn books and warm up the choir: the angels are coming. Welcome to issue 16, where our authors bring 15 different angles to their tiny angel tales.

There are saviours, rebirths and salvation. Angels rising and falling. There is fire and fury, freedom and tragedy. Angels familiar and strange, conspicuous and covert. There are wings of copper and brass, of stone, of ash. And below the beat of heavy wings thrums a dark bass line... Broken angels, lost angels, shadowy and sinister angels.

There's an angel for everyone, they say, and in here there's a story to suit all tastes. Our celestial host cast shadows over many genres, take many tones. Speak in many voices. It's always a joy to see veteran authors returning for another issue, but 101 Fiction thrives on fresh blood, plenty of it, and it's great to have so many new names.

Read.

Absorb.

Enjoy.

Vacation

by Lia Burnham

She paints blistering pox upon her skin. Cool drops of lighter fluid scatter across the instep of each foot. Dampened washcloth held aloft, salivating, her eyes widen as the lighter's metallic rip ignites anointed spots. Toes curled, teeth clenched, she rides agony to climax before releasing the cloth. A nauseating sizzle and the familiar scent of charred flesh wafts into our bedroom. I smile as she wrings every shuddering gasp from her human form. Soon I will awaken engulfed, her tongue licking my swirling ashes off the smoky air like snowflakes, my wings sprouting anew. Then we shall rise again.

Author bio: Lia Burnham is a lawyer working in the Washington, D.C. area. She has recently won contests hosted by Prose and The Angry Hourglass and received an honourable mention in the 43rd New Millennium Award for Flash Fiction.

Circus

by C.A.

Kevyn, leather-suited son of the owner, threw a can into the glass-panelled box where Sacha lay. She sat over her heels and dipped a silver-skinned hand inside it.

“Hide me that stump this time.”

She watched him with red-glinting eyes while a coating of black oil travelled up her arm, across the single wing, and over each of the studs gunned into her scalp a year before.

The moon-kissed tint of her bare body now a faint shimmering black, she rose.

He nodded; the chain of Sacha’s collar shot into his palm.

Kevyn yanked the angel forwards and yelled, “Showtime!”

Author bio: C.A. is a native Frenchwoman and a composer of literature.

She spends her life travelling the world with a suitcase full of books and telling stories to strangers.

Lost

by John Xero

Angel fixed her makeup. *Go big, go glitter.* That's what the punters liked, apparently. *Stands out against the darkness.* She glittered her cheeks, her belly, her breasts. Could use all the help she could get, standing out against the darkness. As if that wasn't a lost cause.

Music thumped through the wall: pounding, raunchy. *Lose yourself in the music.* If you have anything of yourself left to lose.

Sweaty red skin appeared behind her. Delilah, fresh off the stage. The succubus plucked a feather from Angel's stubby wings, laughing as Angel yelped.

"You're up, half-breed." Delilah spat. "Crowd's hell tonight."

Author bio: John Xero thinks imagination, like dreams, is just a series of doors. Follow the music, the lights, find the right door, the right key, and step through. Sometimes it's a trap, more often an adventure.

Fairy lights: @xeroverse

Adventures: xeroverse.com

Music: King Demon (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRY50GjAO7S5Vh4td9d_LMw)

Phaethon

by Chris Brunette

Talk was that there was a new dude in town, a young guy with bright eyes. One wonders how it would have played out had his secret remained undiscovered, but it wasn't long before local gossip had it that he was hiding a pair of wings...

Nobody seems to know what went down that night, the night the angel was seen slipping out, the night he escaped the angry, mocking crowd with a broken wing. But time has passed and at daybreak, so they say, you can see an angel against the sun, struggling home, on a single silver wing.

Author bio: Chris Brunette is a poet and a writer. He lives in Cape Town.

Forsaken

by Adam Millard

I lie upon a barren field, wings broken, smoke rising languidly from my blood-streaked feathers. As I try to piece together what has happened, I search the lea around me, wondering if anyone saw me fall, hoping no one did.

Pain. Exquisite pain, and I'm feeling it for the first time. Sorrow, too, for my transgressions have caught up with me, and now I must pay the price.

I slowly get to my feet, just as my wings turn to ash and drift away on a warm breeze.

And as I stagger-walk toward the treeline, I fight back the tears.

Author bio: Adam Millard is the author of twenty-six novels, twelve novellas, and more than two hundred short stories, which can be found in various collections, magazines, and anthologies. Probably best known for his post-apocalyptic and comedy-horror fiction, Adam also writes fantasy/horror for children, as well as bizarro fiction for several publishers. His work has recently been translated for the German market.

Warning

by Margaret McGoverne

Ears bleeding, she staggered towards the entrance, a moment earlier thronged with Christmas shoppers. Sirens droned old news: another bombing.

She wept sooty tears, festooned with fine glass like the angel hair her mother was buying as the explosion ripped them apart.

The shop frontage lurched inwards, groaning.

A dark face emerged from the smoke, guiding her to a jagged hole. She scrambled clear as the walls collapsed to a festive peal of alarm bells.

Turning to her saviour, she saw his balaclava dissolve, then his sad smile.

A crumpled note, code words in boyish handwriting, fluttered through the rubble.

*Author bio: Margaret McGoverne has recently issued her first novella, *The Battle of Watling Street* (<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Battle-Watling-Street-Margaret-McGoverne-ebook/dp/B06WWJS6MN/>), and is currently working on the sequel, while being distracted by short stories, flash fiction and her blog about all things writing: <http://margaretmcgoerne.com/>*

Murmuration

by Voima Oy

One day a voice spoke to him. *Make her an angel.* He had never attempted such a thing before, but he made a stone angel for his daughter, Molly. It was clumsy and lumpy, but how she smiled to see it. Soon, the back yard was filled with angels, big granite ones and little marble ones. She could see them from her window. Then came the day their wings unfurled in flight. One by one, they circled, upwards. A miracle, a murmuration of angels! How Molly would have smiled to see it. He wept, and the angels wept with him.

Author bio: Voima Oy lives on the western rim of Chicago, near the expressway and the Blue Line trains. Her writing can be found in the Flashdogs Anthologies and online at Angry Hourglass, Paragraph Planet, 101 Fiction, Unbroken Journal and Vignette Review.

Follow her on Twitter, too— @voimaoy.

Trumpet

by Angela Fleenor

When the Central Narrative Agency banned stories involving angels, Layla had no way to tell anyone about her vision. Weeks before, she dreamt of a terrifying silver being with bulging eyes. The being did not speak but emitted a brash cataclysm of noise, and she knew upon waking she was pregnant. It reminded her of a moth she had seen, a silver mask with big black eyes on its wings. She followed it to a bush that bore heavy trumpet blossoms looking down toward the earth. When she touched it she felt the judgment of god, and she was afraid.

Author bio: Angela Fleenor lives in Denver, Colorado (and, yes, she can pass a drug test). Her name means angel. Find her at twitter.com/agfwrites

Release

by Judy Brownsword

Her soul is a beacon cutting a swathe of light through the starry night. I swoop down and land lightly on the pavement in front of her. The newspapers that cover her rise and fall with her breathing, causing a layer of frost to sparkle in the light of the shop doorway. Her emerald eyes, shining like jewels in her emaciated features, fill with recognition as she takes in the winged vision before her. As she reaches out to me, a patrolling policeman approaches, tries to rouse her. He is too late, I found her first, she belongs to me.

Author bio: Judy Brownsword lives in Stoke on Trent, UK with her husband and several rapidly multiplying pond fish. As her career in medical writing progressed into management roles and away from actual writing, she turned to fiction in her spare time. She has won a number of flash fiction competitions and has had one short story published in The Anthology of Cozy Noir. When not writing for work or pleasure, Judy spends her time bouncing from one activity to the next, not devoting enough time to any of them.

Late

by Mike Jackson

Standing on the jetty Peter took out his pocket watch and checked the time yet again. It was most unlike his visitor to be held up. Then, silently gliding out of the cloying mist, emerged the boat he'd been waiting for.

"You're late my friend," he said as the boat drew up alongside him, "No problems I hope?"

The Angel of Death replied in a rasping whisper, "Some people never learn. There are still those who would delay my coming."

He lifted aside a large tarpaulin sheet and added, "Here are today's quota of souls, process them as you will."

Author bio: Mike Jackson lives in the UK and enjoys writing short tales, especially Drabbles. Many of his offerings can be found on his blog 'Stories In Your Pocket'.

Blog: <https://mjshorts.wordpress.com>

Twitter: @mj51day

Pin

by Nathan Alling Long

Security was tight, lines were long, and of course, there was just the one gate, though most people were trying to get in, not out. That made the guards suspicious of Hanza, with his dreadlocks and ragged clothes.

But Hanza remained calm as the guards searched his bags. He smiled as he lifted his arms and took off his shoes. They even pressed their latex-gloved hands through his hair, but found nothing.

Eventually, they let him out the pearly gate. They'd missed that single pin in his hair – a needle in a haystack.

Another thousand angels smuggled out of Heaven.

Author bio: Nathan Alling Long lives in Philadelphia and teaches creative writing at Stockton University. His work appears in various journals, include Tin House, Glimmer Train, Story Quarterly, and Crab Orchard Review. His fifty-story flash collection The Origin of Doubt will be released by Press 53 in Spring 2018. He can be found at <https://blogs.stockton.edu/longn/>

Hashmal

by Ed Broom

Hellish day. Home to find everyone glued to their devices. “Dad,” said Laura, “all shall be well. Hashmal is here.”

News24 showed a figure descending onto the faded H of a Jerusalem hotel roof. Headline: *Hashmal is here*. Footage was shaky, a Cloverfield out-take. Don’t these people ever own a tripod?

He nailed the landing, ten out of ten, and walked to the railings overlooking the city. There, he spread his arms wide giving it the full Rio de Janeiro. Screen switched to an HD close-up. Such a serene face.

“Everyone,” I said, “all shall be well. Hashmal is here.”

Author bio: Ed Broom works in IT but tells his children that he's a lighthouse keeper. He lives in Ipswich and spends most weekends tracking down crinkle-crankle walls.

Malfunction

by Laila Amado

– I swear the angel was assembled correctly. The box was intact, all the components were operational and I followed the instructions diligently. Took me ages to put together the wings – myriads of tiny copper and brass feathers had to fit in their correct places like puzzle pieces. Drove me crazy.

– No, I don't know where he got a flaming sword. I sure didn't give him one.

– Yes, I realise we will have to rebuild the whole thing again and we cannot afford the dinosaurs this time.

– No, sir. No vacation any time soon. Perfectly understood. Personal code – Lilith. Log out.

Author bio: Laila Amado lives in Upstate New York and occasionally writes fiction. You can meet her here: <https://twitter.com/onbonbon7>

Ascension

by John Xero

The angel roared, clawing its way up shifting reality gradients. Black soot streaked its feathers, legacy of some fierce inferno, soot so thick and heavy it could have been tar, weighing it down, piling on friction as it hauled itself across the void.

Impossible, colossal, winged. It traversed space in a way that had taken human science centuries to understand, to recognise, let alone utilise. The same way our ships dragged themselves between fiery suns; faster than light and rough as all hell.

When it arrived it was like a new star had birthed, so bright it was, so terrible.

Author bio: John Xero likes to believe all things might exist if we can imagine them, be they angels or faster-than-light travel, or both, why not?

He tweets occasionally: @xeroverse.

He writes (he should write more): xeroverse.com

He makes music, of sorts: King Demon (

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCRY50GjAO7S5Vh4td9d_LMw)

Soldiers

by Lyric Hyde

We are not who you think we are.

We are soldiers. We are bringers of death, descending on feathered wings, weapons in hand.

Our wings are not white. They are soaked in the blood of devils.

We are not bound by God. We are bound to our generals, forever their obedient dogs.

We are not the angels you love, not the angels you believe in. We are the hypocrites, the warriors who speak peace as our blades drink blood, who sing of freedom as we enslave the world.

We are marching, and we won't be stopped. We are the end.

Author bio: Lyric Hyde is a high school student that wishes to go into a writing career, at least as a secondary job. As well as writing, she enjoys learning, music, anime, and a good book. Fairly new to posting her writing, Lyric does not yet have a specific website, but can be found at various ones such as Wattpad, Figment, Prose, and Young Writer's Society under the name Animarret-Writing.

Thanks for reading.

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