

101 Fiction

Issue 20

September 2018

Welcome to the werewolf issue. More accurately, werewolves and other werethings, so it seems appropriate that half the stories are werewolf and the other half are, well, *other*. With nineteen tiny stories it's our biggest issue yet. Welcome to issue 20.

Something about the were-theme struck a chord and we had more submissions than we've ever had before, bringing a breadth of voices and creativity to the issue. Sure we've got your werewolf stories, with some great twists in the tail, but what about that *other*? The werocats and the werebear. The weremoth. The werexxxxxx (I can't spoil that one!). The creatures too terrible to name. And one that isn't even a living thing... or is it?

There's violence in here, naturally; fear and frenzy, blood and gore, corpses and dismemberment. And who's to say if that violence comes from the wolf or the human. But there is life too, a first kiss, first dates, a proposal, werewolf wives, werepups.

The moon waxes large throughout the issue, only appropriate as the year stalks onwards and darkness claims a greater tithe from each successive day. Shapeshifting in fiction is used as a way to explore different aspects of human nature, often darker ones, and we think all of the stories here, in one way or another, do exactly that.

Read.

Absorb.

Enjoy.

Hatchet

by Eirik Gumeny

We don't always understand the truth. About the world, about ourselves.

Even when it's staring us in the face.

Or spattered against our office walls.

Parts of a trio of undergrads everywhere around me, staining into the shelves, sliding off the armchair. Under my fingernails.

I was horrified, of course.

Then guilt. Then panic. Then...

A quote, from Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*: "Every man should be allowed one day and a hatchet just to ease his heart."

I doubt this is what she meant.

The desk, guttered with claw marks. Full moon on the calendar.

Not a hatchet...

But it'll do.

Author bio: Eirik Gumeny is the author of the Exponential Apocalypse series. He's previously written for Monkeybicycle, Cracked, and The New York Times' Modern Love column, among others. He lives in New Mexico and twitters @egumeny.

Tag

by Susan Moffat

Trees, mud, branches. A howl. Sprinting paws, panting. Hurried breaths, pounding chest. A growl. Heavy paws, gnashing teeth, warm blood. Disembodied screams. A gunshot. Darkness.

Anna awoke wrapped in blood-stained bindings. Monitors beeped, tracing her heart rate. Her heavy hands peeled back the bandage. Three deep scratches scored her arm. Groaning, she stared out of the window, and the moon stared back, full and round. Her heart beat beeped faster.

Flesh itching, hairs ripped through skin. Scream stretching to howl as a snout shattered out through her skull. Nurse bursting in. Anna pouncing. Sharp claws, flashing teeth, warm blood. Screams.

Author bio: Susi J Smith has been writing for over ten years and enjoys writing short stories and flash fiction. She is also a member of a local writing group. Susi has previously been published in 101Words.org, Zeroflash, and McStorrytellers. For more information, follow her on Twitter: @susi_moff or check out her Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SusiJSmith/>

Raging

by John Xero

Tree branches tore like claws into Lillian's flesh as the storm roared around her. She fled with arms across her face, protection from the frenzied wind-whipped forest. Darkness overwhelmed her mind, deeper than the overcast night. Blind panic shifted from a phrase to visceral manifestation.

Boughs creaked and tree limbs cracked and she could not tell what was storm and what was Brian. What had been Brian, before moonlight sliced through clouds and soft skin exuded sleek black fur, slender flesh warped and bulked, and sweet handsome features distended into slavering jaws and hateful beady eyes. Before Brian became bear.

Author bio: Once in a while, when the moon is high and the inspiration bright, John Xero becomes a writer; by glow of screen and patter of keyboard, he creates. One day he will work out how to make the transformation permanent.

Flash: xeroverse.com

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

Bound

by Madeline Mora-Summonte

Errol struggles as his fellow townsmen drag him into the woods, chain him to the Sacrifice Tree. In the torchlight, their faces are sorrowful yet relieved. They've been spared. This time.

Older than dragons, darker of soul than the Devil, the creatures arrive with a great thrashing of their monstrous wings. Errol kneels before their dreadful beauty, weeps for mercy. But their beaks slash, their talons shred, until all that's left of Errol is his scream.

In their silent town, in their empty beds, the men wait, guilt fading. After all, they had no choice.

Their women must be fed.

*Author bio: Madeline Mora-Summonte (<https://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/>).*

Corpsewolf

by Carolyn Ward

Swathes of bluebottles fizzed on the drying blood like an undulating black curtain. Max walked past the empty shop and paused, his nostrils twitching as the heat of the meat hit him like a drug. Not again! He looked around, checking nobody could see, and shoved through the locked door with the strength in his bulging, stretching muscles. Inside was even hotter than the sun-scorched street, and the smell was eye-watering. Max took several deep breaths and fell hard onto all fours, howling and clawing at the bloated corpse. Chunk by rancid chunk the meat went down, flies and all.

Author bio: Carolyn Ward is a writer from Wolverhampton, UK. She lives for horror and even a smidge of gore.

For more follow @Viking_Ma

Wheel

by Matthew Schickele

Kasia followed the bloody tire track along the dark street and through the splintered door of the library.

Werewolves, werecats, werebirds – they took many forms and her spiked club had ended them all. But a Werewheel... well. Could it die? A wheel was not even alive, or so she had thought. And if they could take inanimate forms now...

Kasia shuddered as she traced the Werewheel's snaking path through the bookshelves. Suddenly her hunter's ears piqued: a quiet rustling, like wind through dry leaves.

Her breath froze in fear. The books – all around her the books were shifting, closing in.

Author bio: Matthew Schickele is a Queens-based writer of music and words: chamber music, songs, speculative fiction, opera, and electronic music. @Squidocto

Ungeziefer

by J. H. Malone

Little Franz awoke. Outside, an icy moon hung pregnant over leafless winter trees.

The boy whimpered, then pressed his hands over his rosebud mouth.

Must not call attention.

Lie still. Don't leave this bed.

The tall clock in the sitting room measured the night with its long swinging arm.

Against his will, the boy sat, then stood. Cold oak flooring sent a chill up his legs. Into his vitals.

Reluctant, he advanced down the hall, groping in the dark.

A sound entered his straining ears.

The skritch.

In his father's bedroom, Hermann Kafka crouched on the rug, cockroach once more.

Author bio: J. H. Malone recently returned from Dar es Salaam after spending three years there writing copy for refugee aid NGOs.

Luna

by Voima Oy

The girl with the moth eyebrows, they call me. Yes, my eyebrows are like furry caterpillars, like dark moths on my forehead.

I was always a nocturnal creature. I love the neon and streetlights. I love the moon in the mulberry tree, the garden in the moonlight, the fragrance of the moonflowers, their upturned faces.

By day, I wear silk and wool. Am I a girl dreaming she's a moth, or a moth dreaming she's a girl? The nights are getting longer, now, and the moon is a light in the window. I fly through the holes in my sweaters.

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, 101 Fiction, Unbroken Journal, Vignette Review, Molotov Cocktail – Flash Worlds, Burning House Press, and The Cabinet of Heed.

Follow her on Twitter, too— @voimaoy and #vss365.

Date

by Grove Kroger

Handsome brute, she thought, and he heard the faint words, saw them shimmering across her face. Smelled them. He passed his hand across his rough cheek, knew she'd notice. He was like that.

The evening had gone well. The food was good without being fussy, their waiter unobtrusive, the murmur of voices around them soothing. The moonlight spilling into the courtyard outside was a perfect touch. Should they share another bottle? Probably. He picked up the wine list, smiled at her, knowing she'd smile back. Yes.

But what, he wondered as he thought ahead, will she make of my tail?

Author bio: I'm the author of When the Going Was Good: A Guide to the 99 Best Narratives of Travel, Exploration, and Adventure, and Assistant Editor of Laguna Beach Art Patron Magazine, Palm Springs Art Patron Magazine, and Deus Loci: The Lawrence Durrell Journal. I blog at <https://worldenoughblog.wordpress.com>.

Tinderwolf

by John Xero

“I’ve never used Tinder before.”

“Me neither,” she lied.

“My sister convinced me. Silly. Happy I did, though.” He smiled at her, awkward.

She smiled back. “I know what you mean.”

She did know. He was happy they’d met. It was wonderful, because she was beautiful and his love life was saved.

Idiot.

She brought him back to her den, bade the cubs at the window hide and wait with a single yellow-eyed glare. In the hallway she kissed him, tasted him, felt her jaw shifting in anticipation, felt a sharpness at her breast.

“Silver.” He smiled at her, dangerous.

Author bio: John Xero wonders how age-old myths would take to the modern world and its rapid, occasionally monstrous, shifts in form. It seems sometimes the changes happen as often as the phases of the moon...

Notepads: beside the desk

Blog: xeroverse.com

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

Next thing: coming soon

Sonata

by Cassandra Windwalker

Moonlight dripped from his open hand hanging over the edge of the bed. She padded closer. His heavy breathing, born of the words and whiskey that had carried him past midnight for months, reassured her he would remember these hours as naught but a dream. She stretched before the open window, revelling in the exquisite agony that transformed her feline form into human. If the other cats discovered her curse, they would pity and revile her. She curled against his belly, pulled his arms close, and smiled. Better to be the poet's pet for one night than run free forever.

Author bio: Cassandra Windwalker has lived under the guise of many transformations, but she always returns to her true state of poet under the full moon. Her work has appeared in numerous literary journals and art books, and two of her novels were released this year. You can find her at facebook.com/CassandraWindwalkerWrites and at twitter.com/WindwalkerWrite. She writes full time from the coast of Alaska where she resides with an assassin, a ghost, and a very patient dog.

Engagement

by Ann Roberts

He stayed on his knees, hope reflecting in his azure eyes. Her hands fidgeted, wringing a pinch of her skirt on her lap. She looked over his shoulder. But his earnest gaze kept drawing her in, engrossing her in the sincerity of his intentions. She looked down at her quivering hands and his steady ones waiting for her. How could things be so full of joy inside a reality of misfortune? Her voice shook. "Are you sure?"

"Until the day you use the silver bullet to stop me, I'll love you."

"I'll marry you and pray that day never comes."

Author bio: This is A.E. Roberts' first attempt at flash fiction and found the challenge exciting and enjoyable. Roberts is interested in writing in every genre and style at least once and is now a fanatic for flash fiction. Thank you for reading!

Wifwolf

by *Renée Bennett*

The psychologist says, “Let’s talk about feelings.”

Feelings? Like grass beneath my feet? Breath in my body and moonlight in my eyes?

Crunch of bone. Salty tang of blood.

“The changes you’ve undergone – they must be traumatic.”

Traumatic? Yes. But to build you must clear first. When you grow, you become more than you were.

“About the death of your husband. What you did...”

I smile. I can do that now... smile. “In Anglo-Saxon, ‘were’ means ‘man’. ‘Wif’, woman.” I bare new fangs. “I cleared away the old. I am the new.”

Outside my cell, he frowns. Inside, I smile.

Author bio: Renée Bennett is an author and editor living in Calgary, Canada. When asked, ‘What do you write?’ she replies, ‘Anything I please.’ This is why her bibliography includes Arthuriana, jazzpunk, and zombie erotica, among other genres. Her most recent work has appeared in the ENIGMA FRONT anthologies; she’s nominated for an Aurora Award for ENIGMA FRONT: The Monster Within. Look for her in ENIGMA FRONT: Onward, and BY THE LIGHT OF CAMELOT, both available August, 2018.

Abomination

by M. Yzmore

I didn't leave when my family called me an abomination, then sent me to conversion camp because I liked women.

I left after a gang of my brother's friends had descended upon me, yet my family shrugged, hoping I had been cured.

Then I met my werewolf wife. She knew all about being an abomination.

When she says she needs space, I don't mind.

Because the moon was full when my brother's friends died gruesome deaths.

Because my werewolf wife birthed six werepups, who became six babies, whom I love more than life... Whom no one will ever call abominations.

Author bio: Maura Yzmore writes short-form literary and speculative fiction, as well as humour. Some of her darker fare has appeared in Trembling with Fear, Occulum, and The Sirens Call. Find out more at <https://maurayzmore.com> or on Twitter @MauraYzmore.

Suburban

by Michael S. Manley

Lying in front of the basement TV, fuzzy UHF broadcast painting us in flickering black-and-white, we watched Lon Chaney, Jr.'s meaty face transform into the perfectly-coiffed monster's and I felt ready to howl. *That lousy makeup must've taken hours*, Brenda said. Then she ditched me to soak in the afternoon sun on our neighbour's motorcycle saddle. When the family curse finally took hold, I didn't just lie still and quiet while hair sprouted, bones stretched, language evaporated. *Wolf* didn't feel like I'd imagined. I vaulted backyard fences and chased rabbits through hedges under the full moon. Life finally made sense.

Author bio: Michael S. Manley lives in Chicago, where he works as a software engineer. His writing has appeared in Gettysburg Review, Columbia, The Long Story, Sycamore Review, Gingerbread House and Three Guys One Book. He maintains an online presence at <https://michael.manley.org/>.

Odobenine

by Wm. Brett Hill

Night descended leisurely, but Jack felt little of its languid nature as his skin crawled and rippled. He hated being trapped in the city, locked in his apartment as the change overtook him. He hated being surrounded by people who would never understand.

As his teeth grew long and the hair filled in on his face he remembered that fateful night long ago and the attack that brought him to this sorry state. He glared into the shining moon as he grunted and gave in, falling to the floor. Massive, powerful, absurd... Jack the werewalrus flopped around the living room.

Author bio: Wm. Brett Hill lives on the Eastern Shore of Maryland where he spends time with his wife and daughter, works in IT, and writes stories. His short fiction has appeared in Firewords, Flash Fiction Magazine, and numerous others.

Fluffy

by Roppotucha Greenberg

Mostly human, he patters about the classroom like a stink bomb, prickling his ears. Nobody cares about the cat smell; all eyes are on me. He tells them my private stuff, and they laugh. He's never violent, just gives me an occasional scratch or drops nasties in my bag.

I get home dizzy from misery and boredom; he's the first thing I see, now fully cat, sitting on a dumpster. He stares at me, and it's like being dipped in garbage.

My aunt adores him. As I root in the fridge, she scolds me for spilling his saucer of milk.

Author bio: Roppotucha Greenberg writes speculative fiction.

<https://www.amazon.com/Roppotucha-Greenberg/e/B07CMPJ22N/>

Micro-fiction: @Roppotucha

Tannins

by Kaitlyn Anderson

Tyler and Perry thought it would be romantic to sneak out after curfew and paddle to the middle of Tannin Lake. All the kids in their class did it. Tyler was distracted by soft lips, giggling and panting through his first kiss. He didn't notice the way Perry's smooth hands elongated, becoming something webbed, something wrong. By the time the canoe tipped it was too late.

"Perry," Tyler yelled, treading water with minimal effort. His freestyle led their team to victory three years running, after all.

But Perry didn't answer, circling his prey, preparing to drag the other boy under.

Author bio: I have been published in The Oregonian and studied Psychology and Creative Writing at Oregon State University. My degree has helped me to create believable characters and explore the effects of mental health in fantastical situations. When not busy working on my writing, I like to explore Oregon with my husband, try to keep up with a psychotic Burmese kitten and overweight orange tabby, put sweaters on said cats and laugh maniacally, and stalk Ryan Reynolds on Twitter. Speaking of Twitter, you can find me there at Kaitlyn Andersen @ewokswithme.

Moonlight

by Dylan Cary

When her ship passed beyond the Moon, she changed.

It felt like a migraine at first, except with purpose. Then it moved from her mind to her head itself, like invisible fingers crawling along her brow, her nose, her cheeks, her lips, her jaw. Tearing them open, breaking to build, muscle and sinew and bone.

A terrified breath expanded her chest, ribs, and spine. Strips of skin and hunks of flesh slopped off her body, a cry for help lowered into a warbling howl. But no soul heard it.

The moonlight had kept her human; the darkness brought the wolf.

Author bio: Dylan Cary is an emerging young author living on the tail end of Southern California, amid cacti and palm fronds. She enjoys writing SFF and romance with a twist. Follow her on her continuing writerly pursuits @dylcarywrites on Twitter.

Thanks for reading.

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