

101 Fiction

Issue 22

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You found your way to issue 22; welcome. I'd ask about the journey – the journey is always key – but this time we're more interested in the map. After all, this is our map-themed issue. Come on in, explore our eighteen different and tiny takes on the theme. Let us lead you down paths unexpected.

From treasure maps to tactical maps, magical maps, world maps, heists and holidays, maps are ever-present in our lives, in our fiction and non-fiction, in films and in games. Maps are a part of our common language. They are a way of describing our world, of attempting to know the unknown. And because the idea of maps is so deeply imbedded in our collective psyche it easily makes the leap to metaphor, we understand we are being shown a representation, an interpretation, of territory, whether it be internal or external.

Our eighteen stories traverse boundaries and explore diverse genres. Some of these diversions will lead you through the heart, and the hurt that comes with it, the longing, the lust. There are dark streams flowing through and through, from supernatural horror, to human horror, to everyday horror. There are maps of humanity, maps of murder, and maps that transcend time. There are even actual maps. There are tattoos and sea captains, treasure and distant shores, as is only right.

The maps theme inspired our authors in all the ways we hoped it would, and a few we never thought it could. All the stories here will take you places you didn't expect, they will show you the path then lead you astray... I'm afraid it's up to you to find your way back home.

Read.

Absorb.

Enjoy.

Terminal

by Shannon Bell

Darkness drops its anchor, spreading like ink. Silence holds me gently as my existence unrolls before me like fragile, ancient parchment.

Failures, sins, stains; the pins that track an empty, wasted life.

I scream into the void inside me. I rake my nails across this map of my soul until it is disfigured, shredded, destroyed.

Malignant fingers pull at the threads, stretching them tight.

Light fades and drains away. I am as black as death inside. Wings flutter toward me, stitching death around me like a spider wrapping its prey.

The map burns. Soon I will be ashes and dust.

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. His stories have been published in Dark Edifice, Short & Twisted, 101 Fiction and strippedlit500. You can follow Shannon on Twitter at @ShannonBell1967.

Metadata

by Rachel Newcombe

The *Paris Review* rests in the middle of the bed opened to the Hilton Als interview, you probably nodded off, a bloody cotton ball your bookmark.

It's my first time back, the comforter is smooth and the extra pillows propped on your side; you liked it that way for reading. Stacked on your nightstand, *The White Review*, *The Lonely Crowd*, and in the drawer I never opened, two unused syringes.

I should've known.

You rejected maps, declaring our love was the only guide we needed.

I should've insisted.

With a legend, I may have been able to decode your addiction.

Author bio: Rachel Newcombe is a psychoanalyst in the San Juan Islands and Seattle Washington. Her writing can be found in Contemporary Psychoanalysis, The Rumpus, Anti-Heroine Chic, Hippocampus, 7x7LA and elsewhere.

She is on twitter: @rachelnewcombe8

Legacy

by Elizabeth Spring

My mother never feared getting older. She used to say that wrinkles and furrows were trenches in the battle for dignity.

She would ask: 'Can you read my smile? It tells of adventure, its lines a map guiding you to the truth of who we are. They are my beauty.'

Her lips read like a musical score; her eyes, deep fantasy. The arch of her eyebrow told a tale of mystery; the sheen of her hair was pure poetry.

Even Death fell enamoured of her; stole her away; but my mother left her face in my mirror, as her legacy.

Author bio: Elizabeth Spring is an English teacher, photographer, traveller. She writes mostly fantasy fiction and poetry. Lately, she has found delight in writing very short stories and micro fiction on twitter: @ESWarriorPoet.

Lost

by Sam Shingler

She had agreed to meet him at sunset.

True to her word she stood by the shore, naked.

As he approached, he saw a tattoo that glowed in the fading light, it appeared to trace a path down her spine.

He ran his finger along the line, expecting her to turn and smile.

Fear filled him as he looked down to see she had turned to sand. In his hand a map, the same trail as on her skin.

Along the top the words that would drive him to search for evermore...

I will be lost until you find me.

Author bio: My name is Sam Shingler, I live in Suffolk with my partner, two mad Siberian huskies and a pair of feathered friends.

I love to write.

Delicate

by Chip Houser

A wrinkled sheet of parchment skips corner over corner across an empty plaza of cracked and heaving stone. A wavering cry rises from a collapsed hall. The machines that fought here have rusted to shapeless mounds, their soldiers' bones scavenged long ago. The parchment catches on a clattering stand of dry stalks rising from a mound. Dark splashes dimple the fluttering parchment like the islands of a whimsical archipelago. A delicate map in an age that lacks delicacy. A map describing the mysterious geography of a small violence. Its howling cartographer is no longer hungry, but she is now alone.

Author bio: Chip Houser's short fiction has appeared in Daily Science Fiction, New Myths, Every Day Fiction, and elsewhere in print and online.

Fading

by Simon Williams

Sunlight – real, blue, sunlight – slanted through the sealed crylic. As he inhaled, slowly, painfully, the map became visible to her fourth-level receptors. As breath left him, the shapes disappeared. All his life from pre-seed had led to this, the discovery of the map. Timing was everything. The closer to fading his life came, the clearer the map showed in his spirit shape. His eyelids slid open again. *Find them*, he implored her. The door shook. *I will*. Her eyes flashed and with a silenced sigh he faded, his soul-motes drifting downward, returning to the greenheart as the hunters burst in.

Author bio: Simon Williams lives in Edinburgh, writes short fiction and posts it at www.simonsalento.com. You can follow him on Twitter at [@simonsalento](https://twitter.com/simonsalento)

Cartomancer

by John Xero

Tears of night bled from his emerald eyes, dripping into a copper chalice, a pooling void. He dipped his archaeopteryx feather quill and began to draw.

The pale leather he worked on was stained and yellowed as his teeth. His voice was the long death of mountains groaning as ice and wind scour and devour them. His words were slow, like drips of drying blood.

“Time is just as measurable as distance, as contoured as any landscape. Demonstrably not linear: this skin is from my grandfather, killed before my father was even conceived. Yet here I am, still, mapping eternity.”

Author bio: John Xero thinks all stories are maps of sorts, and maps are just a different way of telling a story. He’s been writing for twenty years, exploring new storyscapes and finding ways to capture them for others to travel.

Napkin maps: twitter.com/xeroverse

World maps: xeroverse.com

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

Treasure

by Ross Jeffery

X marks the spot, denotes where to break soil. This land is too familiar, a peach-coloured map of my own creation, if I were a cartographer I'd be proud. But the contour lines seem to move at will, negating their original purpose. Lines wriggle closer, mountains give way to valleys. Rivers change course, carving up the familiar into an unacquainted landscape. Since the parasites, things have not been easy. I glance up, see the X in the mirror. The infiltrating forces converge, fidgeting under my flesh. An X upon my heart. I pull the scalpel back and drive it home.

Author bio: Ross Jeffery is a Bristol based writer and Executive Director of Books for STORGY Magazine. He is an avid reader of an eclectic mix of fiction and is a lover of the short story form. Ross has been published in print with STORGY Books Exit Earth (Daylight Breaks Through), Project 13 Dark (Bethesda) and Shlock Magazine (Toilet Trauma) – his work has also appeared online at STORGY Magazine, About Magazine TX (After He's Gone) and Idle Ink (Judgements). Ross lives in south Bristol with his wife (Anna) and two children (Eva and Sophie). You can follow him on Twitter here @Ross1982

Quest

by Serena Jayne

Despite my promise to protect your hidden treasures with the avarice of a dragon, my queen, you grant no guidance to aid my quest. Do you fear that once your secrets are revealed, I'll abandon you to seek new challenges?

The paths lead nowhere. Dead ends abound. With neither compass nor map, I am lost; frantic to find my way.

Now my arms ache with my attempts to reach the centre of your labyrinth. The effort makes me sweat. Makes you bleed. Destroys you from the outside in. Yet, I come no closer to solving the puzzle of your heart.

Author bio: Serena Jayne received her MFA in Writing Popular Fiction from Seton Hill University. Before becoming a writer, she worked as a research scientist, a fish stick slinger, a chat wrangler, and a race horse narc. When she isn't trolling art museums for works that move her, she enjoys writing in multiple fiction genres. Her short fiction and poetry has appeared in Crack the Spine Literary Magazine, the Oddville Press, 101Fiction, Switchblade Magazine, and other publications.

My social media links are as follows:

<https://www.facebook.com/SerenaJayneWriter/>

Twitter: @SJ_Writer

Instagram: @jayneserenawriter

Website: serenajayne.com

Sight

by Madeline Mora-Summonte

Jenny listens at Clara's bedroom door, hears scratching.

No one likes babysitting Kooky Clara, with her spooky silence and blank eyes, but her parents pay well, and Clara's no trouble. Usually.

Jenny goes in, gasps.

A map of their town covers the walls, floor to ceiling.

Clara can't reach.

Buildings, roads labelled.

Clara can't read, write.

Slashed X's over all the houses, except Clara's. Two girls huddle in the basement. Clara circles them again, again.

Clara can't see.

Screams tear through the streets.

Jenny grabs Clara. They run for the basement.

Halfway down the stairs, they are plunged into darkness.

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

Shore

by Michael S. Manley

The *Chrysanthemum* ran down a westing, hull broken, wedged across the leviathan's back. Captain had harpooned the barrel-wide eye, piercing deep some monstrous part of monstrous brains.

Thirty-odd noondays since, Navigator shimmied up the wine-dark dorsal, pointed the astrolabe, crawled back to the fo'c'sle where hanged the salvaged lunars, marked off blank distances on vellum scrolls from the hold: *Here Cook lies at rest. Here Cabin-Boy. Here Stevedore.*

Great Old Ones willing, you'll soon draw new borders, Captain said again. *Soon, I'm sure.*

They wept when Lookout called from the crow's nest the sweetest word in any tongue at sea.

Author bio: Michael S. Manley lives in Chicago, where he works as a software engineer. He maintains an online presence at <https://michael.manley.org/>

Pyrate

by John Xero

The captain's coat was like wet tar, thick and heavy with a mean dark shine; his tricorne too. His face was shadow, but his eyes... his eyes were embers, red and dangerous.

Javier could not keep the tremor from his voice. "Thissus the Mappe, yer fearsomeness, to Cap'n Webb's treasure."

Crooked hook-nailed fingers curled like talons around the yellowing scroll and tossed it to the nearby brazier. Greedy flames devoured the old paper.

Javier grabbed for his cutlass, faltered.

The captain's gaze burnt brighter. "What the fire consumes it knows forever, and the Pyrate needs no map but the flames."

Author bio: Stare into a fire long enough and you realise it knows everything, if only you could understand what it was trying to say. John Xero feels that way about the world.

Flaming shots: twitter.com/xeroverse

Around the camp fire: xeroverse.com

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

Hunger

by Scott Paul Hallam

He explores my tattoos with his tongue.

“My body is a map. Follow the dragon’s scales. I assure you, treasure awaits.”

He’s rough, his kisses clumsy from whiskey. At the bar, I laughed at his jokes, feigned interest in his band. Now, his lips travel up my thigh, past my stomach, where the black dragon twists around skulls with leering eyes.

The beast’s elongated neck curves around my breast, its head rests on my shoulder, its fiery tongue licks the nape of my neck.

His final kiss exposes his jugular, pulsating, ready for my teeth, ready to satiate my hunger.

Author bio: Scott Paul Hallam is a dark fiction writer living in Pittsburgh, PA. His work has been published in Cease, Cows; Switchblade Magazine; Night to Dawn Magazine; Unnerving’s “Hardened Hearts” anthology; and Sanitarium Magazine among others. Follow him on Twitter at @ScottHallam1313.

Fairfield

by Ed Broom

"Sir, I've got something."

All eyes swung to the rookie.

"Spit it out, Fairfield," I said. His centre parting joined me at the incident board.

"Sir, both Henry Bergholt and Eddie Wickham had blue lettering on their foreheads. But the third victim, Jimmy Bentley, had 'B2' in red."

"It's not some bloody Radio 4 whodunnit, Fairfield. Your point?"

"This, sir".

Fairfield waved the local 'A to Z'.

"C1, the gallery where we found Wickham. G3? The baths. Bentley."

"Excellent. But why switch to red?"

"Large scale, sir. Eight inches to the mile. More precise."

"And B2?"

"Here, sir. The station."

Author bio: Ed Broom works in IT but tells his children that he's a lighthouse keeper. He lives in Ipswich and likes to track down crinkle-crinkle walls.

Twitter – @edbroom

Headlights

by Brianna Dimarino

Check the map Sarah, check the map. I hear it, it's faint. I hear it over and over. Check the map Sarah, check the map. It's dark, impossibly dark. I feel numb, like I no longer have a body. It was raining, I can hear the rain. There's arguing, I am arguing, *we* are arguing. Check the map Sarah, check the map. Our yelling is loud. Too loud. We were lost, *I* am lost. Then, there's a horn, a loud horn. And lights, bright, bright lights, headlights. There's a crash, then there's nothing. Check the map Sarah, check the map.

Author bio: Brianna is a freshman at the Savannah College of Art and Design and is studying production design.

https://twitter.com/b_dimarino

Lineage

by Anika Carpenter

I drove my toy cars around the block patterns on Nana's carpet, but when she put a steaming cup of tea next to me I didn't imagine vast heating systems. New York meant nothing to me then.

The family cleared Nana's bungalow, I claimed the tea set. The cracks in the glaze perfectly mirrored the layout of the fields around the village she'd lived in all her life.

Holding a cup close to my ear, over the sound of yellow cabs and buskers drumming trash cans, I hear, "I will bring you home. Every day you'll lay flowers for me".

Author bio: Ammophilous writer, art tutor & sucrologist. Longlisted in Reflex Fiction's Autumn 2018 comp, Winner TSS Flash 400 Winter 2018, runner-up BIFFY50 Microfiction Contest (autumn), long-listed Bath Flash Fiction Award October 2018, Highly Commended Dempsey & Windle Memorial Poetry Competition 2018.

<https://www.anikacarpenter.com/>

@stillsquirrel

Perfume

by Voima Oy

"Between the lines of certain old maps, the scent of that flower lingers."

Her name was Carmen de Luna, a professor in the botany department. She recalled her trip up the Amazon, the heat and mosquitoes, a mansion in the jungle hidden by vines and white flowers. There was a jaguar sleeping on the sofa in the living room, a carpet covered with butterflies.

Later, I looked for the map in the college library, but I became lost in a labyrinth of numbers.

I thought I heard the rumbling of a jaguar.

I thought I could smell her elusive perfume.

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 VERStype, 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.

Tattooist

by Ted Underwood

Dip. Scratch. Draw. Repeat. He was nothing if not methodical. A celestial map tattooed upon two favoured concubines was The Emperor's wish.

Tsi, whose hair smelt of the tundra, whose eyes shone the fierce blue of winter skies, was The North.

Shun, whose lips tasted of oceans, whose generous curves were adorned with nothing but pearls, was The South.

His days were filled with soft flesh, deep moans and the metallic scent of drizzling blood. Sweat played upon his temples and the needle slipped between trembling fingers. He breathed deeply. And longed for night, where his dreams were his own.

Author bio: Ted Underwood is a teacher, poet and occasional (bad) actor. He lives in the shadow of the beautiful Malvern Hills with his wonderful, and much appreciated, family.

Thanks for reading.

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