

101 Fiction
Issue 3
March 2014

Welcome to issue 3.

The issue that nearly didn't happen.

Shortly after the submissions period, the 101 Fiction laptop forgot how to boot, and though its super future powered android replacement did many shiny wonderful things, none of them were particularly useful (the Win-do-8 model). Then chrono-thieves stole the end of February. Two whole days, gone. (Someone should do something about that.)

So you'll forgive me for being a little self-indulgent and including three of my own drabbles this issue. I think they're all of the same quality as the other excellent stories, and I think they all bring something different to the table. I hope you agree. And I hope you'll forgive me for tempting fate further with a thirteen drabble issue...

Thirteen thrilling fictions that swing through an impressively wide range of different styles, ideas and moods. All inspired in some way by one or both of the issue's themes: spring, and elementals or spirits of nature.

We like to mix things up at 101 Fiction, so we begin with an Interlude by R.S. Bohn. Things get serious in Chris White's *Famine*, and with the coming of spring, Paul Cosca's *AN-723* brings a moment of poignancy to the post-apocalypse. John Xero Maroons us on an alien world, then Ryan Cox brings the aliens to us. Elizabeth Archer dishes up a cautionary *Breakfast*, but watch those eggs, because Thomas High's *Hatchlings* are up next, and we follow them into space to meet John Xero's *Exile*. Nathan Alling Long's protagonist may not be *Alone*, but Stella Turner's *Alcohol* is definitely not a reassuring answer. Kymm Coveney wraps us in a dreamy *Rapture*. John Xero Whittles myth from words. And Christian Bone brings us full circle with *battling Seasons*.

Thank you for stopping by. Thank you for being a part of 101 Fiction.

Read. Absorb. Enjoy.

Interlude

by R.S. Bohn

The lady's slipper bulged, drooped, and out he fell, damp and curled.

He ended his hibernation always thus, in pink petals newly emerged from curving green stems, themselves freshly pushed out of the dark earth.

Standing, he brushed specks of snow from his knees. The cobwebs of Winter's soul surrounded him: melting ice and patches of white.

Spring stepped from shadows into the sun and banished them.

Behind him, a cold sigh on his neck.

"Not another minute? Or three?"

Spring smiled. "Half a minute, no more."

Winter slipped cool hands beneath Spring's tunic.

Spring shivered, and counted the seconds.

Author bio: RS lives in Detroit, where they aim for a zombie theme park. She thinks one already exists in her head. Admission is free:

<http://rsbohn.blogspot.com>

Famine

by Chris White

She rose, engulfed in the swarm, eyes ablaze, copper discs behind the crush of black bodies, devouring those scraps that remained.

You have summoned me. Her voice was like birdsong, like the droning of bees, like the howl of hunting wolves. *Desperate times, desperate measures. Different seasons, different pleasures.* Her chitin-flesh crawled, a living-dead mockery of a smile. The burghers pressed back, away from this dead thing they had impregnated with power.

Her price was too high, always too high.

In the end they paid it, with the flesh and blood and bones of another child.

Winter ended. Spring began.

Author bio: Chris White is a freelance writer of many styles (but mostly magic realism and science fiction.) He lives in Brisbane, Australia, on the other side of the world. An emerging writer, he pours out a flurry of flash fiction and short stories, mostly here: <http://chriswhitewrites.com>

AN-723

by Paul Cosca

It was a monarch. The sensors picked up the flash of orange and brought back information instantly. Danaus plexippus. The encyclopedia entry scrolled, and the picture matched up. Affirmation. The mobility functions of AN-723 had been manually disabled 165,600 minutes earlier, freezing it in a skyward-facing position, and there had been little need of its ever-weakening sensors since. The monarch hovered, then came to rest on the visual sensor of AN-723. It spread its wings and, for a moment, the machine saw the world through an orange filter. The monarch basked, then moved on, oblivious to the destruction all around.

Author bio: Paul Cosca is a novelist and playwright who spends too much time on the internet. Find him there through his website at www.paulcosca.com

Marooned

by John Xero

Rogan was a bad man and a worse captain, marooned on a long dead planet by his treacherous crew. He wandered between trees that swayed like dancing skeletons – dried husks of pliable alien plant matter that swung and rustled and sniggered in the warm winds.

He chewed on fingers of broken branch with a taste like salted nutmeg.

His flask had run dry. He was parched. Delirious.

He leant against a thick spongy trunk, sank into it. Rough bark-skinned fingers stroked his face, pulled him down, deeper, into cool damp darkness.

Voices whispered in his ear. Inside him. Inviting. Welcoming.

Author bio: John Xero is a husk of pliable alien plant matter who dreams of one day being a real boy. He pays too much attention to the whispering in his ears.

He tweets (sometimes): @xeroverse

Contact

by Ryan Cox

They came first with the flowers and the bees. No one knew they were here. But I saw them.

And I saw them coming when they returned the next year. That's when they took me.

When they finished – when I was all used up – I woke up in my bed, beside my husband, with our son between us. Like it always was. Like we always were.

But I wasn't the same.

The snow melted today.

They're coming.

Megan...

"No... no!"

Megan...

"No... please... I'll come... just... just don't take my son. Don't take them."

I'm sorry Megan. We're taking everyone.

Author bio: Ryan Henry Cox is a musician and writer working out of Detroit, MI.

RyanHenryCox.com

Breakfast

by Elizabeth Archer

When I woke up, I was starving. That's always a bad sign. My stomach rumbles when I'm hungry, and in my case, that attracts attention. On the plus side, that used to always mean that someone came and fed me, fast. Lately, no one seems to care about feeding me before I get hungry enough to cause trouble.

That's bad. My stomach just growled, and my whole body shook. I can feel them running all over, trying to get away. Don't they realize if they'd just chuck a couple of human sacrifices down my mouth I'd go back to sleep?

Author bio: Elizabeth Archer writes flash fiction and poetry, and is working on a novel.

Hatchlings

by Thomas High

The ones with gravel driveways went first. Before word could get out to the people with brickwork paving, more of the hatchlings were waking up, and those who remained were taken in other ways. Rocky beaches took seaside towns; medieval architecture took cities; Ayer's rock single-handedly conquered Australia. Carrying their stony shells on their backs like hermit crabs, they scuttled across the planet in swarms, eager to be fed.

When all was done, the cracks the newborns had made in the Earth grew bigger. A set of spindly legs sprouted from the planet's crust, and it scuttled off into space.

Author bio: Thomas High lives in Norwich. He tries his best to write sometimes. His favourite colour is green. You can visit him at <http://tomrulestheuniverse.wordpress.com>

Exile

by John Xero

This rock was a planet once. We – humanity – labelled it such, before reclassifying it, demoting it. It seems fitting this should be her prison. Mankind asserts itself, flashing its hubris to the stars.

Everything is ours, to do with as we choose.

They tell me she takes many forms, but today she is a man. Handsome, toned, slender. Naked. When I enter he is already seated, cross-legged, comfortable, waiting. His eyes are greener than any human's.

I ask his name.

"The old ones were best," he replies with an easy smile, "Cel, Terra. I've always been particularly fond of Gaia."

Author bio: John Xero can't keep his hands off myths and legends. They are the original stories, and still some of the best. He likes to reshape them, he hopes they will forgive his hubris.

His own legend will be 140 characters long: @xeroverse

Alone

by Nathan Alling Long

In the woods, he had always felt it, that silent invisible, moving when he moved, still and patient as he stood still or sat quiet on a rock. He thought it was just the flow, which moves through all things, or his lonely mind, imagining a presence to accompany him on his days.

But once, when he whipped his head around, he saw it for an instant, before it flashed behind a tree. The pale face, like snow; the matted fur or clothes, like leaves. And those eyes, some deep water, staring at him. Now he wished he were alone.

Author bio: Nathan Alling Long grew up in a log cabin in rural Maryland and travelled around the world before settling in Philadelphia, PA, where he writes, bakes bread, and teaches. His work has appeared in over fifty journals and anthologies, some of which can be found at his website:

<https://blogs.stockton.edu/longn/>

Alcohol

by Stella Turner

The only Spirits I've ever known where the ones in optics behind the bar or in my drinks cabinet. Dorothy announcing she had them in her home was no big shakes. Not until I saw her one day with a slim, good looking toy boy on her arm. I tried hard not to gawp but Dorothy was an overweight fifty year old, not some lithe youth. Each time I saw them together she looked older and thinner, he younger. Like spring and winter, a tiny strong sapling and a withered old twig. Put me right off spirits. I'm tee-total now.

Author bio: I'm Stella Turner, aka StellakateT on Twitter

My blog is <http://stellalikesspidersandothermyths.blogspot.co.uk>

Rapture

by Kymm Coveney

Dying had been like dreaming, except he woke to find himself in free fall. His sylph muscles clenched in panic then rewarded him with the sharp snap of wings spreading wide. Soft June breezes cradled him, nudged him forward.

He conjured her, understood he might reach her by sunbeam, but his balance was shaky and new. Arms windmilling against forewings, he bounced off a cloud. With her as his only thought, he soared finally, arriving on a trail of dust motes. Fairy whispers tickled her ear. She looked up to see his imprint – shoulder and left ribcage – against the sky.

Author bio: Author bio: Ex-pat from Boston living in Barcelona, raising polyglot kids and fooling with written languages.

www.betterlies.blogspot.com

[@KymmInBarcelona](https://www.instagram.com/KymmInBarcelona)

<http://kymminbarcelona.tumblr.com/>

Whittled

by John Xero

The soft snick snick of Oshi's knife licked curls of wood onto the floor and the branch slowly settled into its true shape.

Miro was scornful. "Why do you bother?"

"It is old way of worship, the making of a fresh effigy."

"The gods are gone, Oshi. Fled. Dead. Abandoning us to tyrants."

"So they say." He nodded. "So I pray."

"Ugh." She knocked the figure from his hand and stomped out.

He sighed and followed.

The wooden icon trembled. Stretched its limbs. Blinked.

It coughed wood dust.

"Rebirth," it rasped. "Revenge. Spring is come. I must wake my brothers."

Author bio: John Xero likes to write long, and whittle away words until the drabble's true form is revealed.

Much like his approach to tweets... @xeroverse

Seasons

by Christian Bone

Winter stood on the frozen battlefield, at the edge of Spring's sword.

He was fierce but elderly while Spring was young and blooming.

Winter's tale was to end.

"Your reign is over, old man," Spring cried over the biting wind.

"Why do you do this?" Winter replied. "I have ruled well."

"You are bitter and cold-hearted. It's time for a regime change."

Winter closed his eyes. This was a natural process, he told himself. Like the melting of the snow around him. Like the switchover of the seasons.

Spring sprung. Winter fell.

Soon, another sword unsheathed.

'My turn,' said Summer.

Author bio: @ChristianABone is a retired detective who keeps bees on the Sussex Downs. Either that, or he is a writer who doesn't understand the difference between fiction and reality.

Thanks for reading.

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