

tiny frights



volume III issue I

Walpurgis 2024

COVER ART BY CARL BETTIS

**This issue of *tiny frights*
is dedicated to the memory of Eve Ott**

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Welcome

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Eve Ott

Eve Ott, a contributor to *tiny frights*, passed away on March 1st of this year. Her daughter and her cat were by her side.

Eve was a dear friend, a wonderful writer, and a lifelong supporter of the arts. On one of my last visits with her, when she was in hospice care, she asked to hear any poems I had recently written. That's the kind of person she was. She will be missed.

Podcast

Just to remind you, *tiny frights* has a podcast! A new episode drops every Wednesday night, featuring one work from a previous or upcoming issue of the e-zine.

You can probably find the *tiny frights podcast* from your usual podcast source, or from Bandcamp (<https://caracabecreations.bandcamp.com/>) or Redcircle (<https://redcircle.com/shows/bd120807-a3c4-49a2-b380-80cc1a2c7442>). Bandcamp limits the number of free downloads. Eventually I plan to post the MP3 files to our website.

Next Issue

tiny frights will be open for submissions from May 1st, 2024 to September 30th, 2024 for the Halloween 2024 issue.

Creepy reading!

– Carl Bettis, 4/30/2024

Art, Poetry & Fiction

The Grove

by Teresa Beeding

One taste was all it took.

Maple Ridge's sap trees produced rapturous syrup, an insatiable desire as it coated the throats of the townspeople. Desperate cravings consumed them whole, draining the trees dry of their bounty. Filling their bellies until they could no more.

And when the supply ran out, they tapped their own veins to consume what may be left. Sticky, crimson sludge dribbling down their chins. Sucking themselves dry, one by one.

The need slowly turned to madness, driven into the shadows to stalk the unsuspecting. Draining *them* dry of their sap.

Establishing a new grove to tap.

Scary Fun

The horror of war and conflict
The explosion of shells,
The terror of aerial bombs
The fun of spooky skeletons
The ghost train's scary ride

The threat of global warming
The fierce power of forest fires
The fear of rising sea levels
The cackle of wicked witches
The menace of the living dead

The plight of the world's poor,
Famine, hunger, flight, death
No water, no food, no home
Pumpkins with devils' faces
Cakes iced with black bats

Rivers poisoned with sewage
Oceans with plastic and oil
Air with exhaust fuel and poison
Let off millions of fire works
Bury your head in the sand

– *Sarah Das Gupta*

Statis

The house is darkness.

In the gloom the loose glass chatters,
to the silent dust on the closed piano.
The girl in the portrait fades in the dusk,
faint footsteps sound in the bedrooms.
The clocks are tired of the future,
now the hands creep slowly backwards.

In the garden summer is frozen.
A cold East wind rustles green leaves,
sun flowers look black and cheerless
in the lime trees no birds sing.
Icy dewdrops hang from roses,
diamonds in a dowager's ear.
No swallows nest beneath the eaves.

In the lane there is no traffic,
moss and grass grow in the cracks.
No death, no birth, just existence,
marking time on the same spot.
Eternity, all time collects together,
the same rain falls for ever,
from rooftop to ocean and back.

– *Sarah Das Gupta*

Alpha Male

by Jacek Wilkos

They say you are what you eat. I've always wanted to be an alpha male, but I've already eaten three of them and so far nothing has changed.

Skimming off the Top

by Joelle Killian

A fluorescent-lit lab, reeking of antiseptic. The grandmotherly phlebotomist coaches the patient to breathe as her needle bites into his vein. Blood gushes into vial after vial.

“Seems like a lot.” He nods at several tubes with black labels set aside in a separate tray. “How many tests did my doctor order?”

She hums a soothing tune, pressing cotton to his arm.

He leaves depleted and dizzy. He does not see the creatures congregating at the lab's loading dock door. Waiting.

When sunset turns the sky crimson, the phlebotomist swaps her black-labeled Vacutainers for the cash stuffed in their claws.

The Condemned

Moonlight shivered
as it descended into the abyss of
lost souls, touched the undead bodies that
were almost still, wrapped with fragile,
festering skin.

What's at the end of the
tunnel, at the
point where light gets sucked
up? Is it too cold or is it too hot?
Does life go on forever, contorted in
pain,
as though the world
does never forget, or
do we start anew,
erase all the sins and
sinners, as though
there never was any life
at all
in those layered stacks of
mud?

Is being forgotten for ever
even
scarier than living in
pain
eternally?

– *Fariel Shafee*

How Green Was My Valley

The cannibals are on their way but perhaps they seek only a pit stop, a bed for the night. The stars shine down on them, same as us, the “Vacancy” sign does not blink different colors based on the diet of its viewer. The bobby-soxer behind the desk is starstruck by their leader’s folk dance; you make a mental note to put an ad in the paper Sunday, but will she have run off or been the entree? The end result is the same, you still need someone to cover the midnight to seven shift who doesn’t complain.

They do seem to have an awful lot of luggage in that van. Once everything is moved you go back to the pocketknife, the balsa wood, the wolf you think you see in the block that may instead be a frog, the Blessed Virgin, a butterflied pork cutlet. The remainder of the night will be nothing but you and your knife unless the phone rings for room service. The freezer and its forbidden delicacies lust for the spit.

– *Robert Beveridge*

There are no mosques in Abu Hashara

by Bitter Karella

Abu Hashara is built atop a hill in the desert, where the views of the night sky are so clear that you can observe strange phenomena not even the learned men of Maragha and Samarkand can see through their telescopes. The city has grown around the great observatory, and, since the astronomers work at night, so too do the city residents. During the day, the dusty streets are deserted; you will not find even a dog cowering in the shadows of an alley. Doors are shut tight and windows barred. But at night, the residents come out and the air is thick with the cries of merchants and whores, sooth-sayers and sorcerers. Artificial lights are forbidden here, since they interfere with the work of the astronomers, but you will know when you speak to a local and in the darkness gleaming see wet white skin as pale as a grub, pallid cheeks laced with spidery blue veins, and dark purple things the color of infection, things that once were eyes, many generations ago, bulging and throbbing in sockets—you will know that the people of Abu Hashara had lived in the dark for a very long time indeed.

Break

by Robb Kinnison

The pounding in your head's a motherfucker. Look around. Cocktail dresses and business suits, the uniform of the enemy. How did you get here? Pain. Cold sharp static hammering away at the meat inside your skull. And your guts. Like someone emptied out your abdominal cavity and replaced your intestines with ten handgun magazines and a pistol. Wait. Things are coming back to you. Slowly. You're behind enemy lines. Everyone's staring at you. Must have made a scene. Can't remember. Look for the bravest one. Take them out first. Deal with the rest after. There they are. Their eyes are calculating, full of piss and vinegar and courage and resolve. They're staring at you now. They're ready to take you out. You approach each other. Once you're close, you both grab for each other's throat. Pain. Bent knuckles. Take a second. Re-orient yourself. Your fingers slid against cold glass. A mirror. Change of plans. The bravest fucker dies last. A woman behind you is on the phone, speaking quickly and quietly. You tear at a seam on your lime green cocktail dress and plunge through the stitches just below your sternum. Puncture some membrane inside. In the membrane, your hand fits in the handle perfectly. You pull your weapon from within. There's blood, but not as much as you imagined. Preparation. Cauterized Arteries. The woman behind you tells everyone the police will be here in two minutes. You turn and make a quick head count. 63 of them. Plenty of time.

Leap Year

Spring delayed
one day
comes early enough
still
to make me afraid
the year is building
a roaring
Wicker Man
August.

– *Carl Bettis*

Nonet: Unable to Forget Sweet Memories of Blood

Indulge that shadow deep with doubt, fears
That followed your retreat into
Darkness, restraint loosening
Its tie. Embrace bleak risk:
Reviewing your death
From ghost world where
You'll cherish
Songs of
Blood.

– *LindaAnn LoSchiavo*

My Feelings Still Remain



by VOX

When Spirits Return, Requesting a Favor

In death, some rules cannot be broken but
Your dim dimension ferries souls both ways,
Permitting an unworldly perspective,
Salted with loss, strained guilt of looking back
On thoughtless deeds and what you can't unsay.

In gratitude for favors I have done,
Rewards take many forms—what looks like luck.
Invisible aide. Ghostly sleight-of-hand.

Before your partial sign of presence leaves,
Because your realm forbids a full-face smile,
Your wish coin drops advice: *Remember night.*

— *LindaAnn LoSchiavo*

Everything You Know About Witches

by Warren Benedetto

“Everything you *think* you know about witches is wrong,” Selena sobbed. She struggled against the ropes binding her to the pole.

Father Hugo stuffed kindling under the logs at her feet. He cocked an eyebrow skeptically. “Everything?”

“Everything,” Selena insisted.

“Brewing potions?”

“Wrong.”

“Casting spells?”

“Wrong!”

Father Hugo lit a match.

“Shapeshifting?”

Suddenly, Selena’s face elongated into a long black beak. Feathers sprouted as massive wings unfolded from her back.

Her raven form lunged, driving her beak straight through Father Hugo’s face.

As Selena returned to her human shape, she wiped the blood from her mouth.

“Okay, maybe not *everything*.”

Killer

by Doug Hawley

The man in the dark knee length trench coat had travelled miles from his home on that moonlit night. He knew his way well from experience. His luck was good as always, there was a couple in a new sedan, her with her hand in his lap, kissing him on the face. Perfect.

He pulled open the door and as she pulled away from the man he saw the blade in the man’s chest, then he was in the street bleeding out. She smiled down at him.

“You thought that you were the only serial killer in town.”

[Previously published in *Detritus* and *Extreme Drabbles Of Dread*]

Dark Light

I sit in the dark,
I sit in the dark because there is no light.
It went
Somewhere.
I keep wanting to look for it, but I can't.
I can't, because there is *no light*.

Just before it happened, the sun said
“Trust me”
Like we were about to go on some magical adventure together.

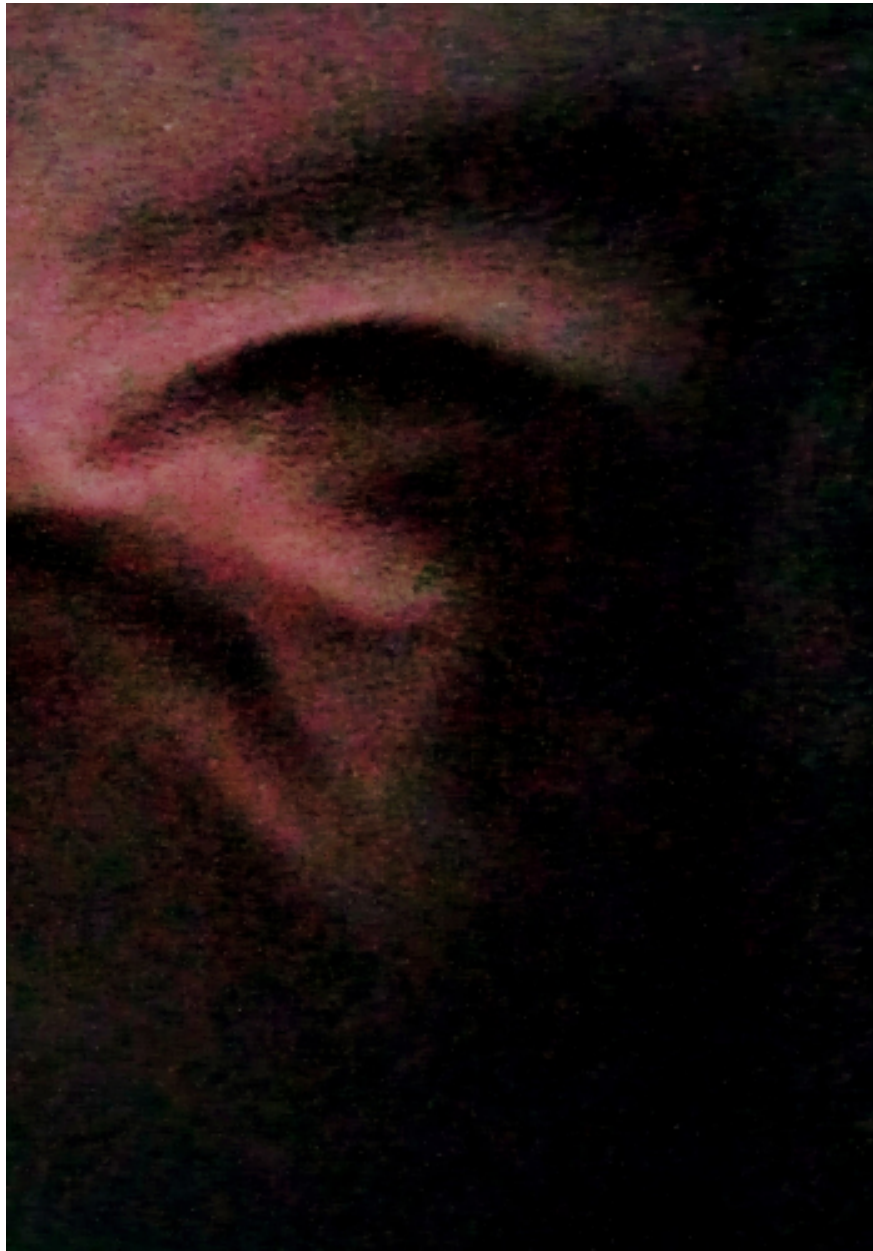
And ever since then I've been bleeding out words.

My shoulder hurts.
It's almost gone, in fact. I can put my hand right through it
Just below my collar bone.

I try to be patient and brave and all the things a hero would be.
No one told me how boring that is,
How many days it takes, even on horseback.

Especially when your quest is so stupid, so silly, so simple.
I just want the sun back.

– *Holly Payne-Strange*



by Andrew Graber

Have you seen my doll?

Have you seen my doll?

She has red hair, and a blue dress I sewed myself.

They promised they would let her stay with me

When they put me in the earth.

But they lied! They lied and lied and lied!

They gave her to my sister instead, just because she cried.

The others in the ground felt me tossing and turning.

“I’ll go and get it for you.” Someone finally wheezed,

Voice shadow and bone. “But I’ll need some help.”

And so a dozen or more scrambled out of the grave

Mostly intact, leaving only a head or leg or—

Oh! I think it’s over. I think they won! I think I’ll get my dolly back.

– *Holly Payne-Strange*

[Previously published by Gnashing Teeth Publishing]

Beware the Beech Tree

by Emmie Christie

The Beech's roots grip the soil above the ground. Its branches stir in the wind, restless in the urge to join the invisible rush of horizontal gravity.

But it waits.

It waits till the night, till its knothole eyes reflect the silver moon.

In the dusk, the Beech loosens its taloned grasp on the earth, jerking its roots free and shaking out the loose dirt. The mice and the rabbits and deer scatter, even though the Beech has never stalked them before. The Beech spreads its enormous branches to its full 70-foot span. It takes to the sky like a rent in a stocking, tearing through the air with that horrendous screech. Something prehistoric, a vast predatory thing, it poses as a tree with root-like talons, and feathers that pass as leaves.

Yet it is not a tree. It is a Beech. It soars near to cities and plants itself in the outskirts. Its screech resounds through the urban environment like a siren's call. The loggers and the tree-trimmers and all those that own a chainsaw within hearing find themselves awake and agog with desire: they must find this tree and cut it down!

The Beech closes its reflective eyes and clenches the soil with its claws. It waits till they are in range, mimicking their natural prey.

Then it strikes. It drags them underground.

The screaming and the pulping and the popping last for mere seconds. It digests, then it takes to the skies, its talons bloody, to hide once more in the forest among the real trees.

Tender

by Blue Grey

Tender love. Tender foot. Tender thoughts and prayers. Tender heart. Tender flesh, melted by worms and soil. Tender meat, falling off the chewed-up bone. Tender juices, chemical flow through porous layers. Red beet. Red pepper. Red spinach. Red cabbage. Red potato. Harvest is good this year, thanks to our new fertilizer. One less thing to worry about.

The night crew is heading out for the next Catch. Security is higher. But, no matter. The soil demands. The hole is dug. The IV lines prepped. The mulch piled. Seedlings ready for transplant. A fresh worm bucket pre-filled. The gardens must expand to feed the hungry. Absorbing inflated egos and their rich-in-nutrients bodies.

Of course, we'll find something to do with all of Catch's money.

Filling Graves

our calendar full
almost every square
doing for others
late night I escape
into horror movies

– *Diane Funston*

The Cemetery

by John Lane

Ever wonder about the people who visit your town's cemetery? An elderly couple overseeing a relative? Unruly kids drunk on cheap beer? Two immature adults in the heat of naked wrestling?

You know what happens to them?

I know... and I won't tell.

If you need to know, then I have some suggestions.

Don't go alone and don't go at night, especially at midnight.

When you go, walk to where you think they were. If you can't remember, your conscience is trying to tell you something.

Then, look down.

A freshly filled grave underneath your feet might clue you in.

Serving You

by Madeleine Swann

Jen's relief when the Nurse left at six pm was short-lived because the anxiety of facing her tomorrow would start to build. She'd called her son on the mobile recently to tell him what she was like (it had taken weeks to get the confidence) but she should have expected his reaction. "Like the monster you hear at night, mum?"

"It's not a monster. It's—I don't know what it is, but it growls outside as soon as the sun goes down."

"Mum," said Mike. His tone made Jen want to tear things up. "Just see how you get on, eh? For me?"

"OK."

The Nurse arrived. "Not pissed yourself today then?" She scrubbed Jen roughly and fed her slimy food. That afternoon she went to the next room to answer her phone. "Yeah, still a miserable cow. Just stares at me. Can't clean her, can't feed her, can't do anything without her complaining. Spoilt by her parents, spoilt by her husband and now spoilt by her kids." She was so loud her voice reverberated, there was no effort to hide it. Quite the opposite, she wanted to hurt. She bustled back in, "Come on, time for exercises."

"Can't today."

"Arms out."

"Oh," Jen shrieked.

Tutting, the Nurse tried to pull her up from the floor, but Jen was a dead weight. "Come on, you old cow," she fumed, eventually getting her back in the chair, "I'm late now." She hurried out the door just as the noises began, deep growls followed by crunching. The Nurse didn't arrive in the morning.

As a Child in Scarecrow Downs

No one drowned
in the Drowning Pond.

Nobody died
under the Killer's moon.

No kids were turned into toads
by the Devil woman.

The disappointment
has stayed with me to this day.

– *John Grey*

Back Street Black Hole

It's a black night
and, for all the stars in the sky,
it's the black holes
that attract my attention.
My cloak is black.
So is my top hat.
Likewise the hairs
on the back of my neck.
I carry a black bag.
Inside are the blackest of instruments.
A black hole, so I have read,
exerts such a strong gravitational pull
that nothing and no one
can escape its vortex.
I'm not nearly so powerful.
But, come near enough to me,
and I can be the general idea.

– *John Grey*

Firewatch

by Gregory Lawrence

CW: OCD and implied assault

You're lying all still, feigning sleep. But I know you're awake. I'm back. Like every night.

You're already thinking about it. My body heat is in the air. You wonder whether you've checked the oven. Fiery fingers dance over your belly. Is the oven off? Smoke tickles, penetrates your throat. Flames will lick your back any second now.

You pretend it's not real, want to go back to sleep. Still you feel it. You must smother the fire, must check on the oven. Like countless times every night. You must feed the fiery demon that your fantasy has made flesh.

These Dreams, Another Doorway

by M. Belanger

I don't know where I am now, but I remember where I come from.

Words I cling to nightly before sleep steals me away. Sleep is just another doorway, and every door here leads to *elsewhere*.

This was not always the way. Once I lived in houses. Once I had a Mom. I think she died of cancer. Then fosters locked me away.

A dark place. Cold and lonely. Rats to gnaw my blanket. A plate of rotten food, once a day.

The door saved me. A door of possibilities. A door of sure escape.

I never wondered where it led to. Anywhere was better. I'd die in that bitter place.

But these doors are endless pathways. Untethered in shifting space. Turn a corner—you're in the ocean. Find a sunken ship before you drown. Dive through the open porthole and you tumble into desert. Survive the snakes and heatstroke until you dig out an empty tomb.

And that door leads you elsewhere, and on and on and on.

I have lived so many places, always passing, never stopping, losing pieces of myself.

Every door leads somewhere—everywhere but out.

I want a door back to my mother. To a place where she is well. Some door surely leads there. I will find it if I search.

I don't remember who I am now, but I know where I must go.

Mother, if you can hear me. Mother, I'm coming home.

Wolf, Running

Full curious, half afraid
I followed the wolf
in my dream last night.
Where could its journey
be leading on city streets?
I never knew.
It picked up speed and
disappeared from view.
No longer did I run behind it,
but pushed myself top speed
in pursuit of something
I can't recall—
Something urgent, a primal need.
I remember dead-ends, a full moon,
unexpected stairs, so steep
I ascended on all fours.
Pebbles embedded in my bare feet.
When did I leave my shoes behind?

— *Ida Bettis Fogle*

Inexplicable

You are a danger sign, a windy mountain road with no guard rail. You are unprotected sex with a stranger. You are the stranger. You are the man in glasses under a street light, watching me unlock the door. You are the door. I can't break you, no matter how hard I knock. You refuse to hear me knock. You are a detached shadow. You are a sudden chill. I can't explain what I fear. You are the fear.

– *Nolcha Fox*

[Previously published in *Scuzzbucket*]

Shadow of a Scream



by VOX

Burnt by the Past

I only planned to store some clothes in the attic from a previous life. Life had other ideas.

She pointed to a trunk plastered with exotic names and stamps.

My grandmother's fur coat was in the trunk, eaten by moths and a failed marriage.

A faded postcard from my grandfather hid in one of the pockets, the writing smudged and waterlogged from a brief swim in the Atlantic.

In the other pocket was a one-way ticket, crisped around the edges. Some say it was an accident, a lantern tipped over by the wind. Others say my grandfather's anger spontaneously lit the house on fire.

This trunk. This coat. This is all I have of my grandmother, the woman I loved more than any of my husbands.

The woman who whispered,

The only way to get rid of an old flame is to set a new fire.

– *Nolcha Fox*

[Previously published in *Imogene's Notebook*]

Take Back the City

by A. J. Van Belle

The ripples in the sidewalk don't concern me. I work in a tenth-story urban development office; what should the state of the pavement matter to me? The gray sky spits a few droplets, but I'm not far from my office, with its sign *Take Back the City* in the window.

A woman trips where the concrete has buckled, catches herself, and hurries on. Lately, between the headlines—disappearing rainforests, loss of plant biodiversity—scientists speculate on what could cause undulations in the asphalt.

The ground rumbles. A sidewalk crack widens. People back away from the spot. I step into the street to go around the gap.

A horn blares. I leap back to the curb amid cries from passersby. "I'm fine, it was only a—" I begin.

Something hits my back. I turn, indignant. But the strike didn't come from a person. A plant stem juts from the pavement, growing as I watch. Its leaves arc overhead. More stalks break through blacktop around me. The upheaval tosses cars aside. Broken pavement casts pedestrians to their knees. Some scream. Some come up bloody. Others don't come up at all.

Skyscrapers tremble. Windows shatter. But I must be close to safety; my workplace is two doors down.

The stems shoot higher, as big as redwoods. They tower over people and vehicles, rivaling buildings, blotting out the sunlight. As I sprint for my workplace, vines envelop the lobby, twining around the words *Take Back the City*. The plants break the glass. Shards rain over me, slicing my face to the bone.

Grey Mary

by Sean MacKendrick

The Mari Lwyd drifted towards Leo, trailing long ribbons that danced in an unseen wind. Bits of food tumbled from its bony jaws.

“Please,” Leo sobbed. “We have nothing left to eat.”

The eyeless ostler blocking the door whispered, “Sing.”

“I told you I don’t know any Welsh songs. We’re only here visiting on holiday.”

Charlotte stood slumped in the corner, slack and vacant. She hadn’t moved since the Mari Lwyd stole something from her mind.

The white skull nipped at Leo. Leo tried to shield his face and earned himself a horse bite on his hand. Blood trickled down his thumb onto the kitchen floor.

“Just leave,” Leo begged. “You’ve already taken everything.”

“Not everything,” said the ostler. “Not yet.”

The grinning skull opened wide.

“Now sing.”

I Lived of Natural Causes

The cure is drastic, contraindicated. Left alone the disease will run its course. Meanwhile, symptoms may be treated with narcotic (some laud holistic) remedies.

– *Mort Duffy*

A Grim Harvest

by Melissa Pleckham

When I found the first doll, deep in the dirt in the stone-walled garden behind the ivy-strewn Henge House, I didn't understand. First I spotted the top of its creamy porcelain head, gleaming from a patch of weeds. With the aid of a nearby rock I loosened the soil around it until I could get a good grip and, working it back and forth while tugging gently upwards, I managed to pry it loose, like a ripe turnip. It was a battered babydoll, unclothed, closed-eyed, and caked with filth. Its arms and legs were bound to its body with twine; on its back was a single word, barely legible in crimson script: Hamish.

When it dropped and hit the ground, the doll's head cracked like a boiled egg. A spider skittered out on whispery legs and disappeared into a patch of clover. Stepping back, I could see the shiny-smooth heads of a dozen more dolls, two dozen, four, a hundred. Enough dolls for every child in the village.

I ran home, barely beating the sunset.

The next morning, the thresher exploded on the Wilson farm. They found him in pieces, Hamish. I knew then what I had to do in the shadow-dappled dampness behind that stone wall. A garden needs tending.

And so everyday I keep them safe, twine tied tight, snug in the dirt. I'm careful not to pull them up.

Unless, of course, they need harvesting. Some do, you know.

The Bitin' Side of Me

by Lee Hammerschmidt

“Hell of a honeymoon,” Detective Garnish said, looking at the body of recently married and more recently deceased Royson Lancet, lying naked in the bed of the Hotel Muscatel Honeymoon Suite. His new bride Pinky was nowhere to be found.

“Hope he got to seal the deal before his demise,” Detective Daikon, Garnish’s new partner said.

Garnish moved closer, looking at the deep, bloody bite marks on Royson’s neck.

“This is disturbing,” Garnish said.

“Whoa!” Daikon said. “You think it’s a vampire killing?”

“Let’s not get carried away. All we have right now is a groom with a chew.”

My Kafka

There is a creature in my head
He gets up when I do
Forgets time before me
He is the gnawing at my skull
The reason I will never be whole
He chews away the bits of me I call normal
Soon there will be nothing left.

– Elizabeth Suggs

Hopelessness Springs Eternal

The hopeless boy meets a hopeful girl
He makes her hopeless
And she makes him hopeful
Together they can live an unhappy life.

– *Elizabeth Suggs*

Raccoon Skull



by Madison McSweeney

Goodnight, Eddie

by Madison McSweeney

The dummy's teeth chattered all night. I buried my head in the pillow, but still couldn't drown out that smacking, nasal voice emanating from his wooden jaw.

"Make me famous, Charlie."

"I'm trying, Eddie."

"Not very hard!" I grit my teeth, but the complaints continued. It sounded like he was hissing directly into my right ear—heck, inside my head, even—which I knew couldn't be true.

"What have you gotten me lately—local radio? A birthday gig every two weeks, if? If this keeps up I'm gonna have to cut you loose, boss."

"Don't talk like that," I pleaded.

"Too late for apologies, Chuck." A creak of wood, and when he spoke again his voice was farther away. "Have a nice life."

It really did sound like he was walking out the door and leaving me this time. Another trick.

I hugged him closer and planted a kiss on his oak forehead. The dummy recoiled, face turning away from me. "Watch the slobber, Chuck, or you'll have to repaint me again."

"I thought you were leaving," I chided.

"Ehhhhh, maybe I'll stick around," he said. "Just do me a favor—stop hogging the covers."

He buried his face in my chest, and all was well.

"Goodnight, Charlie."

"Goodnight, Eddie."

The Fog of War

by Warren Benedetto

Jameson surveyed the battle-scarred landscape. Shadows rose from the mud, moving through the fog obscuring the carnage. The sharp smell of cordite hung in the air. Jameson's ears were numb—the only sound was the agonizing wail of an injured soldier on the ground beneath him. Shrapnel had shredded the man's face; his stomach was a gurgling pile of entrails. Jameson read the patch on the man's blood-soaked uniform. The name was familiar: T. Jameson.

His own.

Damn it, Jameson thought, recalling the whistling of the incoming mortar. *Direct hit.*

He sighed, then joined the other shadows in the fog.

Let it Freeze

Don't rejoice in early springs.
Early thaws release too much
carbon and methane,
a Zombie greenhouse.*

Don't rejoice in early springs.
Early thaws uncover
dead things still rotting.

Don't rejoice in early springs.
Ticks, mosquitoes, and pollen proliferate
and crazy drivers drive crazily.

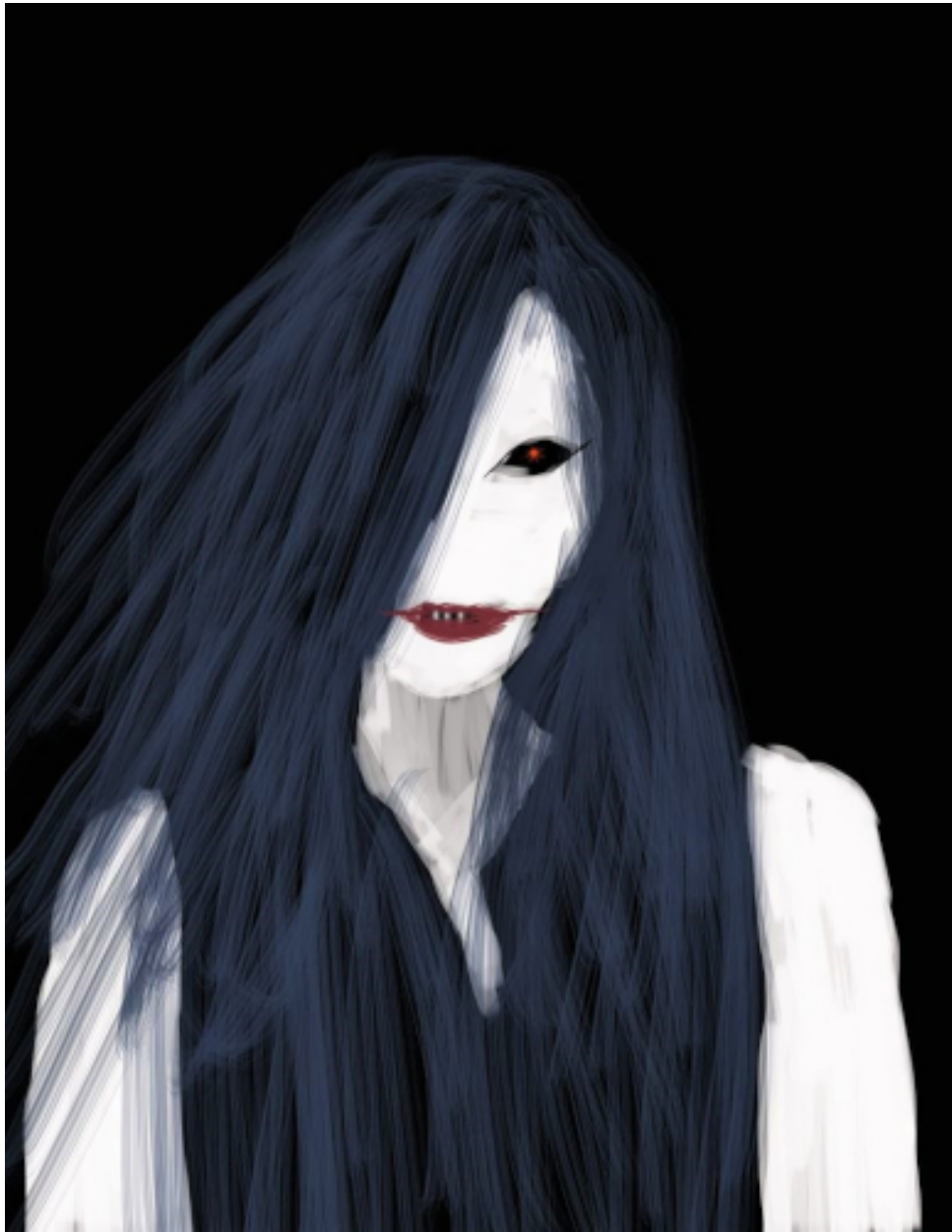
Don't rejoice in early springs.
Let it freeze and let the long freeze
kill organisms that cause disease,
raise low waters, stop erosion of
our shorelines.

Wrap yourselves in blankets,
drink coffee, cocoa, tea,
and let it do its frozen work.

– *Phyllis Becker*

*“Millions of tons of organic carbon and methane beneath the Arctic Ocean thaw out and ooze to the surface each year. And climate change could speed up this release of greenhouse gases, new research suggests.” Nicoletta Lanese, “'Zombie' greenhouse gas lurks in permafrost beneath the Arctic Ocean,” LiveScience.com

The Stranger I Met One Night



by VOX

Other Stuff

Reviews & notations

by Carl Bettis

Books, briefly noted

And What Can We Offer You Tonight; Premee Mohamed, author; Neon Hemlock, 2021. Science fiction horror with both ideas and heart. I always enjoy a good revenge tale, especially if class warfare is involved.

The Book of Queer Saints; Mae Murray, editor; 2022. To quote from the foreword by Sam Richard: “This book is full of queer representation that is messy and ugly and uncomfortable and painful. It’s a book full of queer characters who are cruel and conflicted and complex and interesting. Yes, queer joy, but also: queer rage, queer hostility, queer panic, queer madness, queer violence, queer horror.” It’s an anthology, so of course I connected with some stories more than others, but all are well-written, imaginative, and (like all the best monster stories) ruthlessly human.

Choking Back the Devil; Donna Lynch, author; Raw Dog Screaming Press, 2019. Poetry of supernatural horror and everyday horror, psychological horror and body horror, horrors suffered and horrors committed, all effectively presented. The range here is impressive.

Little Eve; Catriona Ward, author; Nightfire, 2023. A Shirley Jackson Award winner, so my response is probably idiosyncratic. The characters are bizarre, believable, and deep—some monstrous, some merely broken. The prose is good, outstanding in places. The plotting is manipulative. I think that’s meant to reflect the theme, but a better and deeper story could have been told with less misdirection. Probably most horror fans will rate this book higher than I do.

Never Whistle at Night: An Indigenous Dark Fiction Anthology; Shane Hawk, editor; Theodore C. Van Alst, editor; Vintage Books, 2023. This is billed as a “dark fiction anthology,” and that’s apt. Not every story is horror fiction, but they all contain darkness. Of the horror stories, not all are supernatural horror. Every story is worth reading.

Soft Places; Betty Rocksteady, author and artist; Ghoulish Books, 2022. A hybrid prose/graphic novella. The transitions between the two formats is integral to the telling, not a gimmick. The story itself blends cosmic and very personal horror.

The Virgin of the Seven Daggers; Vernon Lee, author. Originally published in 1962, but written no later than 1935. A collection of stories in the realm of the fantastic. Lee was a master of diversely sumptuous prose styles, though her pacing might be too leisurely for today’s taste. She had a sharp sense of irony, and a vivid and twisted imagination. The orientalism, antisemitism, and Islamophobia, all common in her time, spoil parts of these stories now.

About the contributors

Phyllis Becker is the coordinator of the [Riverfront Reading Series](#) in Kansas City. Her collection of poetry, *Proof of Existence*, has recently been published by Scapegoat Press.

T. L. Beeding was born and raised in West Sacramento, California. She wears many hats; a cancer survivor, a mother, a writer, and a medical assistant. She is the author of *They Come at Night and Other Horrors*, and has had her work featured in several anthologies and magazines. When she is not writing, T. L. seeks misadventure with her boyfriend, daughter, and two cats at their home in the Hudson Valley. More about her work and life can be found on her website, tibeeding.com.

M. Belanger writes, "I'm a two-time recipient of the Joseph Cotter Memorial Poetry Prize, a Shirley Jackson Award nominee, and author of over thirty books on weird and spooky topics, including the *Dictionary of Demons*. I live in Ohio and chase ghosts on TV."

Warren Benedetto writes dark fiction about horrible people, horrible places, and horrible things. He is an award-winning author who has published over 200 stories, appearing in publications such as *Dark Matter Magazine*, *Fantasy Magazine*, and *The Dread Machine*; on podcasts such as *The NoSleep Podcast*, *Tales to Terrify*, and *Chilling Tales For Dark Nights*; and in anthologies from Apex Magazine, Tenebrous Press, Scare Street, and many more. He also works in the video game industry, where he holds 35+ patents for various types of gaming technology. For more information, visit warrenbenedetto.com and follow @warrenbenedetto on Twitter and [Instagram](#).

Carl Bettis (he/him), the editor of *tiny frights*, is a writer and software engineer in Kansas City, Missouri, USA. He is on the [Riverfront Readings Committee](#). You can find him at CarlBettis.com.

Robert Beveridge (he/him) makes noise (xterminal.bandcamp.com) and writes poetry on unceded Mingo land (Akron, OH). He published his first poem in a non-vanity/non-school publication in November 1988, and it's been all downhill since. Recent/upcoming appearances in *Daikajuzine*, *Siren's Call*, and *Big Windows Review*, among others.

Emma Christie has been published in *Daily Science Fiction*, *Infinite Worlds Magazine*, and *Flash Fiction Online*, and she graduated from the Odyssey Writing Workshop in 2013.

Sarah Das Gupta is a teacher from Cambridge, UK who has also lived and taught in India and Tanzania. She has had work published in a number of magazines including *tiny frights*, *The Chamber*, *Black Poppy*, *Danse Macabre*, *Dark Horses*, *Grave Light*, *The Sirens Call*, *Tales from the Moonlight Path*, *Star*Line*, *Trembling Fears*, *Flash of the Dead*, *Kaidankai*, and *The Hemlock* among others.

Mort Duffy collects sensations and dreams. His ambition is to one day become a stray thought that troubles a stranger's mind before disappearing into the ether.

Ida Bettis Fogle lives in Missouri, has been writing poetry for decades, and has vivid dreams.

Nolcha Fox's poems have been curated in print and online journals. Her poetry books are available on Amazon and Dancing Girl Press. Nominee for 2023 Best of The Net, 2024 Best of the Net Anthology. Nominee for a 2023 Pushcart Prize. Editor for Garden of Neuro.

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Diane Funston, recent Poet-in-Residence for Yuba Sutter Arts and Culture for two years, created online *Poetry Square* bringing together poets worldwide. She has been published in *F(r)iction*, *Lake Affect Magazine*, *Synkronicity* and *Still Points Quarterly* among many others. Her chapbook *Over the Falls* was published by Foothills Publishing.

Andrew Graber writes, “I am a self taught artist who also likes to write.”

Blue Grey is a Queer-Anarchist AuDHD poet, amateur gardener, and multimedia artist currently trapped in so-called “Texas.” Free them. And be rewarded most handsomely.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *New World Writing*, *California Quarterly* and *Lost Pilots*. Latest books, *Between Two Fires*, *Covert* and *Memory Outside The Head* are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in the *Seventh Quarry*, *La Presa* and *Doubly Mad*.

Lee Hammerschmidt is a Visual Artist/Writer/Troubadour. He is the author of six collections of short stories and illustrations. Check out his hit parade on YouTube! <https://www.youtube.com/user/MrLeehammer>

Doug Hawley lives with editor Sharon. He has written in all of the usual genres and at least one odd one.

Website with urls for six hundred or so publications <https://sites.google.com/site/aberrantword/>

Blog with stories, alternates, inspiration, illustrations <https://doug.car.blog/>

Iranian website (interesting story) <https://doug.ir/>

Bitter Karella is the horror writer and aficionado behind the microfiction comedy account @Midnight_Pals which asks what if your favorite horror creators were to gather around the campfire to tell scary stories. When not writing, he dabbles in cartooning and text game design.

Joelle Killian is a queer Canadian living in San Francisco whose fiction has appeared or is forthcoming in *Mythaxis*, *Trembling with Fear*, and *Cosmic Horror Monthly*. She has also published about psychedelic therapy in her other life as a psychologist, and was part of an undead dance troupe back in the day.

Hero Robb writes and makes games. He has holes in his brain.

John Lane's fiction has appeared in *Versification*, *The Birdseed*, Black Hare Press, *Trembling With Fear*, *101 Words* and many other venues. “The Visit” was published in *81 Words Flash Fiction Anthology*, which won the 2022 Saboteur Award for best anthology. “The Monster Inside” was published in Horror Writers Association’s Mental Health Initiative anthology, *Of Hope and Horror*. John’s website is johnjameslane.com. Follow him on Medium at Lanejohn.

Gregory Lawrence is an autistic translator and writer. Before he was confirmed as autistic, he was known only as proudly weird, and that sense of weirdness has also seeped into his writing. He is interested in horror, speculative and weird fiction, as well as linguistics, constructed languages and history. Originally from Germany, he now resides near Edinburgh, and on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/brblues1>.

Sean MacKendrick's flash fiction has appeared recently in anthologies such as *Dark Moments* and *Friday Flash Fiction*.

Madison McSweeney writes horror, bizarro, and Weird fiction from Ottawa, Ontario. She is the author of *The Doom That Came to Mellonville* (Filthy Loot), *The Forest Dreams With Teeth* (Demain Publishing), and *Beach Vibes* (Anuci Press). She blogs at www.madisonmcsweeney.com and tweets from @MMcSw13.

Holly Payne-Strange is a novelist, poet and podcast creator. Her horror writing includes spooky poetry for Gnashing Teeth Publications, *Icebreaker Lit*, *Medusa's Kitchen* and *Raven Quoth*. Her writing has been lauded by *USA Today*, *LA Weekly* and *New York Times*. She would like to thank her wife for everything.

Melissa Pleckham lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two cats. Her work has appeared in Francesca Lia Block's *Lit Angels*, *Pyre Magazine*, *Tales from the Moonlit Path*, and a forthcoming issue of *Coffin Bell*, as well as the Halloween 2022 edition of *tiny frights*. She is currently writing her first novel. Learn more at melissapleckham.com.

Fariel Shafee studied physics but loves to write scary stories and poems. She also paints. Her writing has recently been accepted by *34 Orchard*, *Sirens Call* etc. Her credits and art portfolio can be seen here: <http://fshafee.wixsite.com/farielsart>.

Elizabeth Suggs writes, "I'm the co-owner of the indie publisher Collective Tales Publishing, owner of Editing Mee, and author of a growing number of award-winning published stories, one of which was part of the Amazon Bestseller collection *Collective Darkness*."

Madeleine Swann has been nominated for a Wonderland award and her most recent book is *Reality But More Fun*. She lives in a state of colourful joy.

A. J. Van Belle is a nonbinary biologist and writer who lives on Vancouver Island with their husband and two dogs. A.J. is a literary agency intern at the Booker Albert Agency, is a submissions reader for *Apparition Lit*, and volunteers in two novel-writing mentorship programs. They are represented by Lauren Bieker of FinePrint Literary.

VOX is a mixed media digital artist of the weirder things in life. VOX's work has appeared in *Suburban Witchcraft Journal*, *Dreams & Diversions*, *The Horror Zine*, *Wayward Literature*, *Dimension 9*, and other publications.

Jacek Wilkos is an engineer from Poland. He lives with his wife and two daughters in a beautiful city of Cracow. He is addicted to buying books, he loves black coffee, dark ambient music and anything that's spooky. First he published his fiction in Polish online magazines, but in 2019 he started to translate his writing to English, and so far it was published in numerous anthologies by Black Hare Press, Black Ink Fiction, Alien Buddha Press, Eerie River Publishing, Insignia Stories, Reanimated Writers Press, Iron Faerie Publishing, KJK publishing, Wicked Shadow Press, CultureCult, Clarendon House Publications. FB author page: <https://www.facebook.com/Jacek.W.Wilkos/>

About *tiny frights*

tiny frights is a free e-zine, published on the [tiny frights website](#), via [email](#), and in EPUB and PDF formats. No print edition is planned.

The zine is published twice a year, appearing at the end of April (Walpurgis Night) and the end of October (Halloween).

tiny frights also has a weekly [podcast](#), each episode consisting of one work chosen from a past or upcoming issue of the e-zine.

Instagram: [@tinyfrights](#)

Facebook: [tiny frights](#)

Bluesky: [@tinyfrights.bsky.social](#)

Mastodon: [@tinyfrights@social.horrorhub.club](#)

Podcast:

- Bandcamp: <https://caracabecreations.bandcamp.com/>
- RedCircle: <https://redcircle.com/shows/bd120807-a3c4-49a2-b380-80cc1a2c7442>

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