

101 Fiction

Issue 8

June 2015

Welcome to issue 8.

Two years gone. I'd like to say 'in a flash,' but it's been a long couple of years (and over a hundred flashes). Our second year as a quarterly ends here, the last of four colour-themed issues, with *red*.

The issue opens with one of the most powerful drabbles I think we've ever had. Then we get into the science fiction, the fantasy and the horror. There's quite a journey ahead of you, from the past to the distant future, our own world to far-flung others. Your travelling companions are the usual unusual misfits we love at 101 Fiction: robots, vampires, myths, murderers and oddballs. Not too dissimilar to our demographic, really.

For me, it's a great issue, hitting all the wide-ranging notes I always hope the 'zine will. Not just a range of genres, but a range of tones. Dark corners and light-hearted clearings, serious moments and frivolous ones provoking thought and laughter alike, all seasoned with a little weirdness and vision, and all bound together with some really smart writing.

Welcome aboard the red line.

Read, absorb, enjoy.

Disgusted

by Clara Ray Rusinek Klein

Mama clamps her hand over my eyes, fingers tight.

“Nein.” Papa yanks her away. “He needs to see.”

I press my nose to the glass, breath fogging. Far below, a small procession shuffles on the cobblestones, men in coats and fedoras gripping suitcases, women clutching babies, wide eyed boys and girls clinging, cringing at the walls of helmets and gleaming boots, the bare-teeth barks of slaving Shepherds straining their chains.

Papa steps back, letting the curtains fall. Outside, pops ricochet, shouts echo. Scowling, he rips the red armband from his sleeve, flings it into the fireplace. Sparks crackle, cloth curling.

Author bio: Clara Ray Rusinek Klein is bilingual in Spanish and English. She holds a BA magna cum laude in Political Science with a minor in Religious Studies. Ms. Klein is an internationally published creative writer and author and the founder and Editor in Chief of A Quiet Courage (<https://aquietcourage.wordpress.com/>), an online journal of microfiction and poetry in 100 words or less. Her one-hundred-word story Ostdeutschland was chosen as an Editor's Pick on Postcard Shorts. For more information and a full list of current publications: clararayrusinekklein.wordpress.com.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/aquietcourage>

Jade

by Voima Oy

Here on this world of dust, I wear a piece of green. Canadian jade from Vancouver, where the Pacific crashes against the cliffs. I found the pebble on the beach, before we left for Mars.

It's red here. It is a world of one colour, filled with dust. It flavours our coffee. We eat it for lunch. It's a topping on our salads, grown in the hydroponic tanks, under the artificial sun. Zucchini and green beans grow well here.

We have grown apart, Alan and me. His brown eyes scan the ridge in the evening, watching the sunset turn blue.

Author bio: In real life, Voima Oy lives on the western edge of Chicago, near the elevated line and the expressway. She writes about all sorts of things.

Twitter: @voimaoy

Realism

by Jonathan Hawk

She has to be the best model I've ever worked with. Completely motionless and silent for hours.

My gaze lingers on the shine of her ruby lips as I dab more acrylic onto my detail brush. I stroke at my canvas, caressing the shadows in the ruching of her crimson cocktail dress. She's a sports car: sleek, beautiful, exhilarating.

"Perfect," I sigh, setting the brush aside.

I step over to her and gently squeeze her earlobe. Her exhaust fans whir to life and her numerous internal devices emit hushed clicks and hums as she exits sleep mode.

"Hello, Primary User."

Author bio: Jonathan Hawk is a sesquipedalian and "ugly bag of mostly water" from the Baltimore, Maryland area. He's an avid free culture enthusiast and Creative Commoner. His stream of consciousness haunts Twitter as @doublecompile.

Survive

by John Xero

Old fence post, rusted, swung with thick gloves, connecting hard with hooded head. Stranger folding fast, going down, heavy.

“Take his clothes. Any food.”

Desperate scavengers descending. Tearing torn cloak, seeking some element to aid their own survival. Hitting hard metal.

“Some sort of armour.”

Hesitation. Hostile glances ricochet. This they may be unwilling to share, its value unbounded.

The stranger shifts, red glint in artificial eye. Robot rising.

Scavengers die, unpleasantly, wailing, weeping, wet.

The old cold prince looks up, sees no satellites, wraps up, again.

Broken tones, electric noise, settling. “Huh. Humans. Didn’t think there were any left.”

Author bio: John Xero writes. A lot. He’s trying to write long, but the short still calls to him, the shortest most of all. He should blog (xeroverse.com), he should tweet (@xeroverse), but he rarely does.

Home

by William Eckman

Welcome to Last Ditch Station. That display? Stupid thing's said "ALL CONDITIONS: RED" since I got here. The smell? Cooking and body odours of seven different species. Food court is down that hall – you'll eat standing up, no room for tables and chairs. Watch your step, sweeper bot broke down last month. OK, here's your sleeping cubicle, built for two, but you'll share it with five. Final advice: everyone here loves to spread rumours – don't listen, especially when they say the Reptilons are laying eggs. Sure, they say Reptilon hatchlings eat humans, but like I told you, rumours. Just rumours.

*Author bio: William Eckman blogs about science fiction at Planetary Defense Command.
<http://planetarydefensecommand.wordpress.com/>*

Time

by Denny E. Marshall

Professor Mensa has just completed his time machine. The machine is chrome coloured, cylindrical shape, and large enough to hold passengers. The professor's assistant Tim E. Travel opens the door to the machine and steps in. After entering Tim slides the door shut. On the interior walls is a large display of dials and levers, and an oversized green button. Below the button the words, *Coordinates Set, Push Here*, are displayed in red LED lights in large letters. Tim hits the button. The action activates an automated voice that says, "It's 8:16 p.m. thank you for visiting the time machine."

Author bio: Denny E. Marshall has had art, poetry, and fiction published. One recent credit would be cover art for Disturbed Digest June 1015. See more at www.dennymarshall.com.

Intervention

by Julia Reynolds

Fate weaves our lives from threads of grey and brown. A sparkle of blue or silver shines here and there for the lucky few.

But for you, warrior king, she only uses one skein. Crimson, vermillion, and scarlet blend in your lifeline, which extends longer than seems just. Blood-red dyes bleed from your fate onto those of all whose paths intersect yours, a spreading stain of violence.

If Fate had her way, you would die in your sleep at 85 in a concubine's arms. Fate and I disagree, and so you feel my sword at your throat tonight, young prince.

Author bio: Julia Reynolds is a writer in Austin, Texas.

Curious

by Shenoa Carroll-Bradd

My husband's beard is blue. The stain on the key... is not.

“Anything you like,” he'd said before leaving. “What's mine is yours, except this one room.”

I tried to distract myself exploring my new home. Tried to be patient. To be good.

But in the end, I disobeyed.

Inside the room, I found pieces of the wives who'd come before me.

Headless.

Gore-soaked.

And now, no matter how hard I scrub, the traitorous key remains blood-stained.

When he returns, my husband will see. He'll know, and he'll add me to the collection.

Some doors, once opened, can't be shut.

Author bio: I like to write in just about every genre, but my favourites are horror and fantasy.

My author homepage is www.sbcfiction.net and I can also be found on twitter @ShenoaSays

Omens

by Grace Black

Star-crossed lovers die and fleeting moments burn like bricks. Yet, we do this thing exchanging vows, walking aisles of ash as if redemption lies at the wake. Nothing in common, just a “pretty face”. Rice fed birds explode. But no one sticks around to see. A tradition steeped in harm and waste. Empty tin cans rust. Discordant clang.

The sanguine English countryside, my china cabinet is filled with transferware. Dishes that remind me of the bloodied bird and a place I’ve never been but walk by everyday inside my living room. A room for life where I’ve come to die.

Author bio: Grace Black writes poetry and flash fiction and has been published in Unbroken, Pidgeonholes, East Coast Ink, 101 Words, and more. Her first collection of poetry "Three Lines" was recently published and is available on Amazon. More of her writing can be found on her blog <http://graceblackwrites.com>

@blackinkpinkdsk

Hollow

by Cindy Vaskova

Eric ambles down an uneven pimento coloured cobblestone, finding the beach. Languid sea's bubbling foam spreads out. "Strange," Eric thinks, sitting down to poke a stick at the seagulls. They infest the morrows, but now this dawn has none of them flying as they are all under the brush of the glowing sand; featherless crimson critters. Eric lies down. A choking hazard wind blows past him and he yelps; his sticking tongue catches some from the swarm of tiny ruby crystals. He can quickly feel them forming razor sharp polyps under his skin. "Strange?" Eric laughs with the red seagulls.

Author bio: Cindy Vaskova is a lover of fiction anyway it comes, and especially of all things weird and dark, and whenever the chance she likes to write some of those of her own. She'd skip a university day to write a horror tale. You can find her at her blog <https://cindyvaskova.wordpress.com/> and on Twitter @Raptamei

Chum

by Daniel Gooding

My pal Eddie took me out on his boat; said we were going shark fishing.

As he busied himself in the cabin, I looked around for the bucket. "Don't you need any of that bait, you know, the stuff you throw in to attract the sharks?"

"No need, buddy."

I felt a searing pain across my thigh; next thing I knew I was smacking against the water, bouncing along on a long, red wave.

"Eddie! Buddy!" I yelled. "I'm in the water!"

"Yeah!" he called back. "I know!"

The boat turned. Ahead of us, the water frothed white like toothpaste.

Author bio: Daniel Gooding was born in 1984, and has been published in 'The Legendary' and 'Woolf Magazine.' His short story 'Crow Magnum Xix' is featured in the upcoming anthology 'Startling Sci-Fi: New Tales of the Beyond' published by New Lit Salon Press, and he occasionally blogs about books for 'The Guardian'. He currently lives in Bath, UK.

Desert

by Sean Sam

The warning light flashed red again. Samantha sighed and pulled over, getting out of the dirty white Ford Focus, glancing along the road. Nothing but desert.

A shape appeared in the distance, a speck swelling into the form of a big rig through the heat haze. It pulled up alongside her and sat idling, covering her in shadow. The window on the passenger's side went down.

"Your oil is drained," a man drawled.

"What? How do you know?"

"I drained it. 'Bout thirty minutes back at that rest stop. You won't need it anymore."

She heard the stranger's door open.

Author bio: Sean Sam is a writer from the east coast. His most recent work appeared in The Corner Club Press. He graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Still

by Danielle Bordelon

She wore the colour of lust and anger.

She spoke gently into my mind, her lips still. “You are the one that has been searching.”

I nodded, excitement and euphoria in my veins. Finally, I had found her.

Her eyes crinkled at the corners, though her lips remained unmoving.

“You are young.”

“Yes, but I’m ready. I am done with this world. Truly.”

Her body was still, though her eyes followed my every movement.

“Please.”

She held out a hand – too white, too still.

I took it.

For the first time, she smiled, her teeth as red as her dress.

Author bio: Danielle Bordelon is a fiction writer currently focusing on short stories and the editing of her novel. She lives in an apartment with three friends, hundreds of abused books, and an overactive imagination. Her short stories have been published in literary magazines including Black Fox Literary Magazine, Quail Bell Magazine, and the Fast-Forward Festival and are available on daniellebordelon.com.

Taken

by Shannon Bell

Those lips, stained red with the blood that flows beneath, stained darker with the blood that flows above. Those lips, shaped like a funeral wreath, evoking sadness and hopes of rebirth.

Those eyes, they glow like rubies while you empty me and fill yourself. Those eyes. Fierce, obsessive, wild and seductive. They are not windows to a soul; they are doors to death and portals unto immortality.

Those lips, blood red leeches, stinging, sucking, greedy, hiding your instruments of violence and of redemption.

Those eyes. They enchant and possess and command me as I lie wrapped in your vampiric embrace.

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 highly dysfunctional family and looking after his extremely energetic, attention seeking, high maintenance dog.

Man

by John Xero

I used to imagine a fat little demon squatting astride his bald head, one pustulous arse cheek resting on each shoulder, short grubby fingers grabbing at the controls and making him do those evil things.

Until I realised it was all him, just a man meting out the daily cruelties man is capable of.

And the little red demons were clustered about his feet, looking up admiringly. Here was something to aspire to, a thing that called itself man.

My only consolation is that one day he will be theirs, and they will return all they have learnt, through eternity.

Author bio: John Xero writes. A lot. He's trying to write long, but the short still calls to him, the shortest most of all. He should blog (xeroverse.com), he should tweet ([@xeroverse](https://twitter.com/xeroverse)), but he rarely does.

Hollow

by Sean Patrick Kelley

Death is an unappreciated artist. Her palette of painted children every colour of her lurid dreams. They approach with gray skin, green bruises, black blood, empty blue eyes, puckered purple wounds, and white bone. Their grasping hands know the gnawing, broken teeth of hunger. Their dead eyes see nothing but what they lack. Robbed of their lives, bereft of higher purpose, their base natures rule them. The restless dead only see one colour, the colour of their passion, that hue denied them. In their still cold hearts they know only hate, and the word comes unbidden to dead lips: red.

Author bio: Sean Patrick Kelley can be found in Heroic Fantasy Quarterly, the Earthdawn roleplaying game, and other gaming publications. He is the co-founder of the Paradise Lost writing workshop. Follow him on twitter under @Endiron.

Thanks for reading.

All work published in this issue of 101 Fiction and on 101fiction.com is copyright of the individual authors. Please do not reproduce without permission.