

# THE Legacy

The Legacy is seeking submissions for its Fall Edition.  
The deadline is **November 8, 2013.**



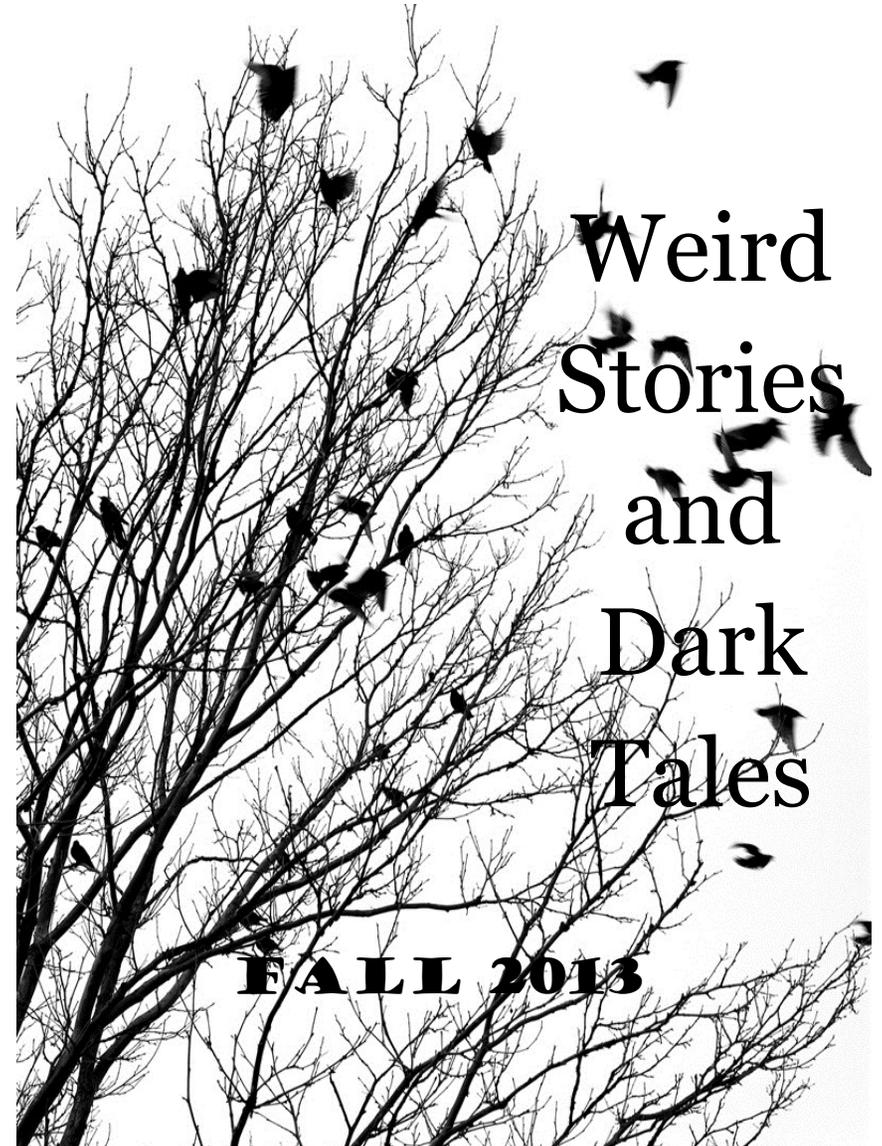
## Submission Guidelines

The Legacy accepts submissions from current WTAMU undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, faculty and staff members of the University community.

All written submissions should be sent as a .doc; .docx or .rtf attachment to **legacy@wtamu.edu** with the following information given in the body of the email:

- Your full name.
- Your name as you wish it published.
- Your major and class standing (Freshman, Sophomore, Graduate student, etc.) if a student, or year of graduation if Alumni.
- Your department if faculty or staff.
- Contact Information: email and phone number
- Additionally, identify the genre of work you are submitting in the subject line.

# THE Legacy



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Special Edition

Fall 2013



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## FIRST PLACE

### They Were So Proud

by Alex Holden Martinez

The sun was high in the sky, giving warmth to the small town of Malum. The air smelled of blossoming flowers and fresh grass. A pleasant breeze blew gently through the trees. There could not have been a prettier day in April.

Inside the town's doctor's clinic, a couple was admiring their new born baby. "She's beautiful," the man said with joy in his voice. "I just *know* she'll be chosen." The girl's mother stared in admiration at her daughter. The baby's eyes opened, innocently gazing at the new world around her. The little girl was so precious and innocent, all seven pounds of her.

The door opened and the couple immediately straightened their postures. A tall Man swiftly entered the room. He wore professional attire and smelled of expensive cologne. He was gorgeous. He spoke in a clear and seductive voice.

"This is your child—born today, a girl, weighing seven pounds—correct?"

"The Beautiful Man inquired. "Yes!" the couple exclaimed with devotion. "We prayed you would come for her!"

The Man picked up the baby. As if touched by a burning iron, the infant girl let out a shriek of pure dread. "She must not take a liking to me. This only makes it stronger," He said. With this the girl's parents looked ecstatic. "We will begin in one hour. You know what to do." The Man said as He put the girl down and left in a smoke like fashion.

"Our baby girl! She's the one! I *knew* it!" The girl's mother looked down at her daughter. "We'll name you Gilda." She said and hurriedly began the preparations.

The couple took their daughter down the street to the town circle. Several people had already gathered there. "What an honor!" many exclaimed as they passed by. The couple passed a woman holding another new born baby. "So lucky," she said, trying to hide her disappointment.

They entered the circle and climbed the stairs to a stage in the center. On the stage was a large crystal bowl with an ancient look to it. Barely visible due to age and fading were the words *Rex Dolus*. The circle was now full; nearly everyone in town was there by now. The Beautiful Man appeared next to the couple, seemingly out of thin air.

"We will now begin." He said. His voice seemingly magnified but no less charming. "Take your positions." The Beautiful Man lifted his arms, and five Sambucus trees erupted from the ground around the perimeter of the

simply that shadows follow and an end will come."

A little shaken, Darin left the tent and rejoined his friends outside, banishing all thoughts of what the witch had said. The drive back to campus felt like an eternity. Everyone took turns telling each other what the fortune teller had told them without a care in the world, except Darin. The fortune kept creeping back into his head: *shadows follow*. No one seemed to notice and to each story they laughed and speculated what she meant. Darin's turn came and as he spoke the car grew hushed. Once he had finished it was quite a while until anyone spoke.

"Maybe you're gonna die soon." Someone jokingly said.

Darin forced a chuckle and in turn every one laughed and joked about such a thing happening to Darin. Shadows follow...

The next day in class, Darin noticed an unnatural shadow in the corner. With each day it grew and after a week he swore it had eyes. Darin secluded himself in his dorm, never turning out the light, never letting shadows enter the room. His friends hadn't seen him in days. On his last day, they say him running through campus screaming.

"It's after me, it's after me!"

He ran straight into the street and stopped to see the shadow gone, only to have the shadow of a truck blot out his light, and life. The police questioned many even the fortune teller, who responded "I am a fake, I just told him some mystic voodoo junk". His death was ruled an accident. It was fear of impending doom that killed him, the truck was merely a tool of that fear.



## Destiny's Fear

by J. B. Reed

Only God sees the future and that is scary to us mere mortals. It scares us not to know what tomorrow will bring, but the real truth is that knowing is indeed scarier. Darin learned this truth all too well in the early fall of his last year. Like many, he lived carefree only taking time to be worried about his classes in college, until his friends had a thought "Let's go to the carnival."

Darin had no protest against this, in fact he was more than happy to go for the girl he liked was coming too. Toward the end the night, things were winding down as some of the attractions were closing. Among the empty stalls a small black tent squatted. The words above the entrance stating "Fortune Teller". Darin had always tried to avoid superstition things such as fortune tellers, but his friends cheered and laughed.

"Let's go try it!"

Darin resisted, "It's not my thing", to which they replied, "It's all fake so come on, *what's the harm?*"

He joined them as they approached the tent. A sickly, raspy voice beckoned them in, "*One at a time*".

One by one they entered the tent. The time came for Darin to do the same. Once inside he saw many shelves lining the edge of the tent filled with books and cultic items. A table filled the center of the room. At the far end of table sat an old crone dressed from head to toe in dark robes. Darin could not see her mouth move, but he could hear her voice.

"Sit down, so we may begin..."

"Don't I need to pay first?" Darin asked in surprise, wanting to leave.

"Your fee has been covered, now let us waste no time".

She placed a deck of cards on the table and began to lay them out one at a time. Darin recognized them as tarot cards but had not the faintest what they meant. She laid the last card out. Darin recognized the image. The grim reaper stared blankly back; death.

The old gypsy recoiled.

"A black shadow upon you, there is an end coming in your future!"

Darin glanced nervously from the card to the woman.

"W-what can I do!?"

The crone sighed then spoke "Fear not, for I know not your end;

circle. People began to line up at the base of the stairs. The Beautiful Man began chanting, and produced a dagger from thin air. The first man in line climbed the steps, took the dagger, and swiped it across his open hand swiftly. He held his hand over the crystal bowl and let the blood flow down into its depths. Next was the woman with the other baby. She repeated the process for herself, and then made a small cut on her baby's hand as well. The process continued until every man, woman, and child had cut their hands. The bowl was now halfway full. Gilda's parents then handed her over to the Beautiful Man. She howled with disgust with more intensity than the first time. He glared into her eyes and said "thank you all, for giving me strength." And with that he silenced Gilda with a quick snap of her neck. He pulled at both ends of her tiny body viciously and released the green and red mixture of her insides into the crystal bowl. He dropped the remains of the tiny corpse with a splash in the bowl. The Beautiful Man stripped down, revealing two large scars placed on both sides of his back, just below the shoulder blade. His eyes turned blacker than any abyss or cave on earth. He lifted the bowl up and drank slowly. The ritual for power was complete. Gilda's parents looked on with joy. They were so proud.



## SECOND PLACE

Untitled

by Danielle Kiper

She awoke with a start and, with her heart racing, felt behind her right ear. A distinct tingle, or tickle, was calling her attention there. Was it a remnant from the dream she had just had? It must have been. Looking at the clock, she was convinced of no gain in trying to go back to sleep; the alarm was set to go off in two minutes. She threw the covers back and the remembrance of her dream, accompanied by that bothersome feeling behind her ear, helped her fight the desire to pull them back up to her chin and sink back down into the bed. How could she not remember a thing about that dream, and yet, ever so acutely, *feel* that feeling it left her with? “Strange how that happens,” she mused. She had a busy day ahead of her. Laundry had been calling for a while now, dishes were almost piling up, and she had a list of things to do in town.

Scratching behind her ear she entered her house after completing her in-town errands and started on her house chores. She noticed the same tickling feeling behind her right ear just then, and that it had been there all morning. Instinctively, she reached up to scratch it away and noticed the area was surprisingly tender, almost sore. Had she been scratching so frequently as to *cause* the tenderness? Surely not.

Continuing with her business about the house, her mind wandered to the dream that had caused her to wake with such a start, and there it was again: the tickling behind her ear! Now annoyed, she went to the bathroom for her mirrors to suss out the cause. As she investigated, she noticed her skin was red and irritated, and actually broken. She had scratched all morning long and had broken the skin! Thankfully it was not bleeding. But the tenderness had graduated to pain.

As she was looking in her mirrors, she noticed a spec of imperial red appear within the broken skin, and, as it slowly grew, it overtook the jagged edges along the broken surface behind her ear. Slightly shocked and a little queasy at watching the blood grow and change color, she checked behind her left ear to see if, in the absence of the small amount of blood and broken skin, she could attribute a cause. Imagine her surprise when the left side looked worse than the right side!

The scratches ran deeper and longer down onto her neck, and it appeared as if these scratches had been bleeding all day. There were several different layers of dried blood she could see. The first was a deep brown and already flaking, on top of that was a black-cherry layer, not yet ready to flake and still stretching with the rest of the skin as she pulled at it. And yet still another layer that kept breaking, causing the sanguine fluid to slowly seep out and ooze down her neck. She ran to her bed to check her pillow and discovered blood puddles all over it.

flooded her mind and Krista beat her hands against the door’s surface ignoring the pain as she cried out for help. Tears started to fall from her eyes and her breathing hastened.

There was only one escape route left: the back door.

She whipped around to flee from the evil spirit only to find herself face to face with the woman instead. Her back slammed into the door and her hand covered her mouth.

The sight of the woman’s face brought a whole new level of horror. The woman’s eyes were gouged out!

“I found you...” she told Krista as she lashed and grabbed her by the arms. “You will pay! You will suffer as I have suffered!”

Krista screamed and struggled to get away, but the evil spirit was powerful. She cried out in pain and continued to fight. “Let me go!” Krista cried as her energy began to leave her. The ghost seemed to be stealing her strength! “I didn’t do anything to you!”

“You will suffer!” the woman repeated. “You will suffer as we all have!”

Krista saw new ghosts appear behind the woman. All of them were exactly like the woman holding Krista. Their eyes were missing, their clothing ripped, and they were all coming her way.

Her voice failed her and as each woman started to grab her, everything went dark.

## House of the Blind (Excerpt)

By: Jessica Burris

Krista crept to her door and pushed it open just enough to peek out into the moonlit hall. She couldn't see anything out of the ordinary and began to wonder if her imagination was playing games with her mind again. Still, since her dad slept heavily and the dog didn't bark, it couldn't hurt to check the house just to be safe.

She slipped out of the room and ventured towards the stairs with the intent to check the first floor. Her feet brought her to a sudden halt when her eyes beheld a terrible sight causing her blood to run cold.

From the point that the stairs reached the second floor to the end of the south hall was a trail of crimson stains that littered the carpet. Along the walls were smeared hand prints and long red streaks. The air turned chilly. All sounds, the wind, her father's snoring, everything died out.

Then, a voice full of sorrow and pain rose up. "My eyes...why?" it pleaded.

A pale and bloody hand gripped the corner wall of the south hall and dragged forth the thin figure of a woman who staggered and swayed. One hand remained clasped over her eyes while the other searched the wall. Her jeans were slashed to pieces as if someone took a razor to them. Rivers of blood flowed from each cut. The upper portion of her tank top was drenched in the blood that streamed from her eyes and ran down her pale and swollen cheeks. Her cracked feet drug across the floor and bled on the carpet.

"Help me, please...my eyes...is no one there?" she woman begged and cried drawing closer to the stairs.

Fear grasped her mind. Her body trembled violently. Her heart beat so hard she swore it was about to burst.

When the woman made it half way through the hall, Krista gasped and stumbled back. The wood groaned under her weight.

The woman's head shot up. Time froze for a moment. Then, extending both arms out, she rushed at Krista as she shrieked.

Krista screamed and made a break for the stairs, barely ducking the woman's grip. She skipped as many steps as possible and ran for the living room. She tried turning on the over head lights. That should scare the woman away if she was a ghost, right? But when she flipped the switch, the lights wouldn't heed her call. She feverously tried over and over again, but it did no good.

She cursed and sprinted for the front door and yanked on the handle. An unknown force held it back preventing her from escaping. Terror

Afraid she was losing her mind she closed her eyes, took a deep breath and raised her hands to check her whole neck and face. Much to her surprise she found everywhere her fingertips touched, there was a thick, warm, moist fluid accompanied with the same pain, and still no explanation. Disconcerted and completely horrified she looked in the mirror at the visage now belonging to her. She brought up her hand timidly and reached behind her ears and, ignoring the dull ache, pushed in until her flesh came up over her fingers and she was touching bone. She did the same to her cheeks. Next were eyebrows where not only hair came out, but chunks of skin also. There she stayed, poking and prodding until she was no longer recognizable. The pain had died away, but that incessant tingling was ever-present. What she would give to make it go away.



### THIRD PLACE

#### Surrender

by Jeffrey Schiller

Boiling, bubbling, bone melting brew  
Green, brown and red, the witch spells up her goo.  
Howling and barking at the full moon  
The werewolf is hunting he will find him real soon.  
A dash from one shadow, and into the other  
Who can imagine the frights he is about to discover?  
A scratch at the window, a tap 'neath his bed  
Should he bend down and look, at cost of his head?  
With courage of fire, and will made of stone  
The boy springs from bed, and to a safe zone.  
He sprints to his armory, prepares himself well  
A bat becomes sword, he is ready for hell.  
Fog fills his room, billowing too dense  
Whispers of doom awaken his sense.  
The mist is so heavy, he cannot see  
Enemies meet sword and great savagery  
He opens his eyes, and his room is no more  
Not even his victims, not even their gore.  
Instead in its place, is an evil pitch black  
"Survival" he thinks, is the only way back.  
Surrounded by trees, bleeding sap through their bark  
His hope begins to fade, like shadow in dark  
The hairs on his neck, stand tall out of fear  
He could tell it was out there, feeling it near.  
The forest was thick, smelling strongly of death  
The crackle of leaves, the sounds of his breath.  
The roots grabbed his feet, the branches his clothes  
He slashed with his sword, and threw a few blows.  
The dark did not yield, but continued its feeding  
By the time he broke free, his body was bleeding.  
An anger grew in him, powerful and vicious  
He screamed at the darkness; challenged the malicious.  
No answer had come, at least none he could hear  
The shadows just sat there, drinking his fear.  
The fog began rolling, out from the trees  
The movement confusing, as fast as a breeze.  
Enveloped again, whispering foes had returned  
Impotent to fight, his fury just burned.  
"Join us," they called in response to his silence  
His anger so real, he fell to their guidance.  
Eyes tightly closed, he prayed with his might  
When he finally looked, the forest was gone from sight.  
The room was lit dimly, from where he could not find  
"Get out," was the warning, from the depths of his mind.  
The prison's black walls were the same as the floor

It's been two days and he has yet to return. Where is he now? I hope he doesn't come back. My curiosity gnaws at my subconscious begging me to check out the wind chimes. One peak won't hurt right? Just enough to know what they are and know they are not as bad as they sound. I can do this; I know I can, just a peak; if I can only overcome that nerve racking hollow sound. It cannot be that bad. I know it should be okay. If I just cover my ears I won't notice the sound.

Clink...clink...clink...

I look around and walk to her vacant porch and hold a wind chime in my hand. Is...is that a rib? I walk past all the other wind chimes and notice they all have a similar shape and feel. Not wood, but bone, human bone. That cannot be right, that is too inhumane...that's not right! She has ten chimes...eight bones per tier....three tiers...twenty-four bones...that means ten dead women. Oh, no! No, no, no. This can't be right, how can she not notice human rib bones? I walk backwards off the porch losing my footing and end up falling off the porch hitting my head on the sidewalk.

Clink...clink...clink...

The old lady is gone. The police are taking the wind chimes down. I look through the window and watch them bustle around the crime scene. No body has been found. I don't think they will find one. He did it this way. It was on purpose.

I don't want to leave my house. I walked outside to find a wind chime hanging from my house. There was a small puddle of blood beneath them. It's the old lady's. He was here... The police are gone. I'm left alone with him. He's watching...



## Wind Chimes

by Hayley Clevenger

He's here again to visit her. He has always made me feel uneasy. He drives around in a RV and he comes and goes as he pleases. He always brings her wind chimes, weird looking wind chimes.

Clink...clink...clink...

That grin...that horrifying, disgusting, gut wrenching grin he gives me...it's like he is planning something every time he looks at me. There! You see! He gives her another wind chime. All she does is hang it up and thank him. And that awful sound...it's not even musical.

Clink...clink...clink...

He leaves again, giving her a hug and kiss goodbye. He just climbs into his RV and leaves. I know he will be back in a few days. He always is. He has to give her another wind chime...another trophy. She likes them. But she does not even notice they are odd wind chimes. She doesn't notice they are not made of metal.

Clink...clink...clink...

Maybe, while he is gone I can go and see what they are made of. It's curious, those wind chimes. She has over ten of them. All of them artfully crafted and unique, they are tiered as well, something odd for wind chimes. The sound makes them odder...and they being a gift from him even stranger.

Clink...clink...clink...

If I could just look at one and satisfy my curiosity on what they are made of, then I would be okay. Just one peak...just one that's all I need. I can be quick. Just wait until she goes inside and he is gone. Then I can look and I can figure out what makes that horrible sound.

Clink...clink...clink...

I know I shouldn't look...but I need to. I need to find out what is making that sound! What does he use and why give it to her? How come she is so important to have those blasted wind chimes hanging off her house. Why does she keep them? They are meaningless. All they are, are trophies of some awful act he committed. Women have been going missing. What if it is him? What if he is taking the woman and doing things to them...are the wind chimes his trophies? What are they made from! I must know!

Clink...clink...clink...

He searched for escape, but found not a door.  
Something ran past, barely caught by his eye  
A growl from behind him, the boy readied to die.  
He spun with his sword, and faced the black beast  
Eyes glowing red, sharp fangs set to feast.  
He lifted his sword, there's no time to chop  
Like a blanket of death, the creature landed on top.  
Through the veil draped above him, he caught glimpse of light  
It grew as he stared, it fought against the night.  
The vision before him, drove him down to his knees  
His home was on fire. Mother, father, Louise!  
The flames were so hot, but he pressed forward through tears  
Was his family all gone? This was his greatest of fears.  
With a crack and a sizzle the house fell apart  
The boom of the rafters blew him back to the start.  
Shivering wet 'neath the sheets of his bed  
The boy dared to look, and poked out his head.  
Looming above, shrouded in black cloak  
Was a boney strange man, who whispered, when he spoke.  
An angel of darkness, here to claim his soul  
With a finger of bone, Death pointed out his role.  
"You have a last chance, to stop what you just saw  
To save your sister, your mother and pa.  
Embrace your end, it is now time to choose  
It's you or the others; someone will lose."  
Fear filled his thoughts, but love ruled his heart  
What choice could he make? He chose to depart.  
Death opened his cloak, for the boy to crawl in  
Life was truly over. He had come to THE END.

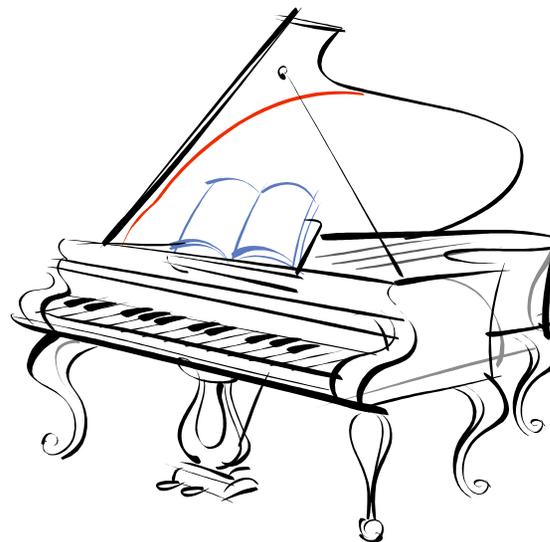


## Untitled

by Christy Schroeder

There sat a cat in the pumpkin patch, outlined with turtle zombies.  
This vampire cat, his fangs sank into a rat.  
Zombie turtles want this cat, for a scrumptious snack.  
What dismay etched in all that gray.  
The fog in the wind, rolling in death's stench.  
Tis it a plan that cannot withstand.  
The vampire cat sits in the sand, turtle zombies closing in.  
What's a vampire cat to do?  
Prance, pounce, paw, and claw.  
Turtle zombies, too many to show.  
Poor vampire cat, could this be the end of his draw?  
The music of it all, turtle zombies in a brawl.  
Chomp, chomp, chomp.  
So slowly the zombie turtles clomp.  
One after another, after another, after another.  
Vampire cat's heart, thomp, thomp, thomp,  
trying to tear clear of these zombie turtle's chomp.  
Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh,  
what's on the loose?  
Why it's that ol' mother goose.  
Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh,  
did that ol' mother goose really swoosh up the vampire cat?  
Stretch those little zombie turtle necks  
Reach and stretch as they may.  
The zombie turtles will not be able to chomp upon that vampire cat.  
As that Ol' Mother Goose has swooshed that vampire cat far, far away.  
Oh woo to the zombie turtles dismay.  
They'll just have to wait for another dinner tray.  
Ol' Mother Goose has swooshed vampire cat away to a land that's made out of  
clay.  
How can one play on such a dreary day?  
Ol' Mother Goose just how long will vampire cat have to stay  
In this land of clay?  
Till Ol' Hallow's Night  
Vampire cat must hide in fright!  
The land of clay sits by the bay.  
There was a horse the very next day.  
This horse had a twitch,  
For it was a witch.  
Ol' Mother Goose was caught in a noose.  
This witch pulled quite a switch.  
Ol' Mother Goose was turned into juice.  
Vampire cat now has a boost.  
On the edge of the cauldron he roosts.  
Vampire Cat laps up the brew.  
One couldn't help but stare,

The voice that wasn't Baba's got angrier and more vicious as the end of the song neared but it was fading too; the screams were becoming those of an old woman in pain again. Vasilii could hear things slamming into a wall upstairs. The song's grand finale blasted out of the piano under Vasilii's direction, ending with a flourish. A long high-pitched whine of a scream, like a passing jet engine, peaked and reverberated through the house. Vasilii clamped his hands over his ears. Then there was quiet.



## Vasilii's Song Abridged

by P.C. Thomas

Vasilii took his place at the piano. A thin layer of dust had collected on the old family instrument; it had been a while since Vasilii last played the song. Not too long, though. He glanced around the dimly lit sitting room, massaging one hand in the other and breathing shallowly. The dust was much thicker on the rest of the room's sparse furnishings. Vasilii wasn't even sure if the TV still worked. On the wall was a picture, a very old picture of a beautiful young couple taking their first steps off a boat and into America. They are smiling and holding each other. Vasilii can recognize the man and woman as his grandparents, Baba Zoya and Deda Boris. He remembered when Deda would play the song while Vasilii sat next to him on the bench, watching the man's fingers fly back and forth across the keys. He could barely remember what Deda's face had looked like, only that it looked ancient, like stone.

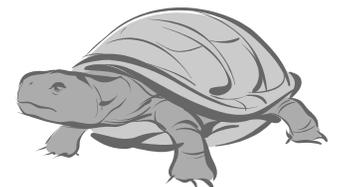
Now Vasilii rested his fingers on the ivory keys and closed his eyes, letting out a long breath. The noises from upstairs were getting worse. Baba Zoya hadn't stopped screaming but she was talking at the same time. Vasilii didn't know what she was saying, she wasn't speaking Russian anymore. With dread, Vasilii began to play, just like he remembered Deda playing. He held that picture in his mind. As the first notes began to come out of the old instrument the sound of Baba's screaming changed, rising in pitch with each key he pressed. Soon more voices joined the wailing and made it a dissonant chorus. Vasilii tried to push the noises out. It was too late to stop now. He had to finish the song.

Instead of listening to the noise Vasilii tried to think of his family. He thought of his father, Grigori. When Deda Boris got too to play old father started playing instead, but he wasn't at good at the song. Baba talked to father when he played. Vasilii couldn't hear it, but she said mean things to him. He tried to remember father's face but all he could think of was how he had found father in the bathroom with blood everywhere.

Now the song quickened, adding complexity with the quickening tempo, and the tune of Baba's shrieking matched the rise and fall of the song. Occasionally she spat out an insult that smacked against Vasilii's mind like a slap. He forced himself to think about his older brother. Vlad was better at the song than father had been but he listened to Baba Zoya too much, he even talked back to her. On the last day he stopped playing and stood up from the bench. Vlad had marched like a prisoner to his execution, up the stairs and into the room at the end of the hall. Baba's screaming had stopped a long time before Vlad's.

As the song neared its peak Baba's screams began to sound more like moans of ecstasy, crying and crooning with each crescendo. At the same moment she began to talk to Vasilii. Promises and curses flowed through him, this voice like a dark knife sliding into his mind. It was not Baba's voice. Vasilii continued to stare forward at the crumbling yellow sheet music, sweat dripping into his eyes. He didn't need to read it, the notes came to him as natural as a heartbeat. It just helped him focus.

At that crazy mare.  
Who conjured a werehare.  
What a sign of betrayal?!  
Werehare dismantled the mare.  
Vampire cat leapt high into the air.  
For we all know he could not fair,  
Against such an evil werehare.  
From the magical brew, wings he then grew.  
And with them he then flew, to a land covered in blue.  
It's really not for you, for your heart is not true.  
This the demons knew.  
Vampire cat didn't have a clue.  
In this land of blue, demons did stew.  
Gnashing and clashing the claws all a flashing.  
Vampire cat was dashing.  
He took such a thrashing.  
Barely alive, he managed to survive.  
He hid in a hole trying to revive.  
Zombie turtles hit the tide.  
All night they will ride.  
Vampire cat in his slumber, could not hear over the thunder.  
In a twist of fate, born from the demon's hate.  
From a dead rat they did create, the vampire rat with which to bait.  
Zombie turtles to seal vampire cat's fate.  
Conjured by the smell of Ol' Hallows Night's spell.  
Summoned zombie turtles from hell.  
Rung Death's doorbell, from his slumber Vampire Cat woke.  
In his hunger was about to choke.  
Vampire rat could provoke such a horrid joke.  
Zombie turtles quickly approach.  
Vampire cat was quick to pounce at that vampire rat.  
These demons won't renounce.  
Vampire rat bites back.  
Zombie turtles give flack, for it's all about a quick snack on vampire cat.  
Werehare joins the pack, creates such a wreck.  
Vampire rat sets the trap on the demons back.  
Zombie turtles snap poor vampire cat's neck.  
Really what the heck?  
Zombie turtles got their snack.  
The demons got their revenge.  
Werehare is in the snare for those demons didn't like all that hair.  
Vampire rat became a useful tool just to be used like a fool.  
All this wrapped up in a spool.  
Who knew that zombie turtles would drool?  
As they saw all that was cool.



## Sea Tied

by Summer G. Baker

Wind roared across the sea, throwing cold spray against the figure standing just within the water's reach. Cold whipped his clothes, bit his skin, sank into his bones, soaked his bare ankles and his pants legs. Cold wind and cold water. So cold that his body had forgotten what it meant to be warm. So cold, that maybe it never had been.

*Shhhhhhh, shhhhhhh* the sea whispered to him. Like a mother shushing her child. But the sea was no mother of men. Mothers didn't drown their children.

His flat, gray eyes drank in the flat, gray sea where the horizon met the flat, gray sky. The stink of brine and fish soaked the air, killing all memory of the scent of grass and dust and warmth.

Some distance out, a great breaker rolled in toward him. As it crashed against the shallows, he saw something split the wave: one moment not there, the next... *there*. A woman, pale as the underside of a fish, hair the color of the bottom of the sea, entwined with seaweed and tiny starfish. She moved through the surf toward him, not walking so much as gliding through the water. When she lifted a hand, her fingers glittered with scales that winked at him in the twilight, and a thin membrane of webbing stretched between them.

She was the sea.

Her breath smelled of saltwater, and when she spoke, he saw the tips of tiny, pointed teeth behind her pale lips. With a voice like water gurgling over stones, she said, "You are ready."

"No," his mouth said.

Yes, his heart screamed.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

"You called me."

She stood so close to him that her black eyes flickered like shale by candlelight. When she grasped his hand, he expected her skin to be slimy, but it felt only damp and chill. Everywhere that he touched the water, or that she touched him, or that she touched the water, he could hear the ocean singing. High, old, heavy voices, singing in a language he did not know. She stared into his face, her eyes deep pools of dark, still water.

The sea whispered *shhhhhhh, shhhhhhh*.

He didn't realize how deep the water had become until his feet left the sandy ocean floor. His gaze broke with hers in surprise and he found himself up to his chin in icy saltwater. He paddled with one arm to keep his head above the surface, but the woman still gripped his other hand.

When a person stood up to their fear it would vanish but how does anyone tell a small child that they must face the green-eyed, scaly monster under the bed and that mommy and daddy could not help them. Some managed it, adults and children alike. They looked their nightmares in the face and told them to scam because the dark and unknown held no more power. Others though, were consumed by their nightmares, most by way of mental anguish others were physically consumed, because they did not know how to defeat what terrorized their minds. Their friends tried to help them, telling those still scared how to get rid of the terrors that plagued them. A few listened, a few escaped - but many didn't. They remained lost and trapped.

The dawn was their rescue. Pink hues highlighted the horizon and announced the sun's arrival. Those beautiful golden beams floating through the cool morning air disintegrated the remaining nightmares... but left those who had dreamt them still in fear.

Some referred to that night as the Dream Night, but others christened it The Night That Terror Ruled. No one died that night, thought their loved ones believed they had. Everything changed after that night. Many people had faced their darkest fears and were better for it, but other were wholly consumed by what they couldn't face; their fears brought to life haunted them - always...



Screams

Cries

Mayhem

Terror

...and the night had started out incredible.

by Laci McGee

By some chance of correct planetary alignment, or because someone's wayward wish on a shooting star came true, dreams this particular evening began to come to life. The first dream was that of a young girl. She had dreamed for a puppy, the one from *Lady and the Tramp*, and was awakened from her afternoon nap by a little, rough tongue licking her nose. Other dreams began coming to life soon afterwards: little boys got the games and toys that they had been begging for, girls got unicorns with bright manes that sparkled, lost loves were reunited, and many a parents' financial troubles suddenly vanished...

...then the nightmares started.

Pleasant dreams on this strange night only came into being when a person wanted them but the night terrors came unbidden, unlooked and near impossible to banish. The thing about fears is that they often come unbidden; when people try and lock them away they knock even louder at the subconscious, forcing their way through when they are least wanted.

Funny enough, the nightmares began with the same little girl who had first gotten Lady from her favorite movie. In her bedroom the shadows of the trees outside created the image of a bear on her wall - this was her monster under the bed. This nightmare came to life roaring and drowned out the girl's screams and her little dog's barks of defiance...

Dark secrets that people feared others hearing, were suddenly known by all and families with loved ones far away were told that their children would never come home. As bad as those were they were not the worst. Many people do not fully examine what they fear, and the result of this flaw, on the Dream Night, was half formed monsters made of flesh, and imagination that ransacked the homes of those that feared them. When the monsters escaped they lumbered through the town and as terror of them grew they became larger. These nightmares became chimeras; things worse than any one person could imagine.

People went mad this night, when the sun was shining brightly somewhere else. No one knew what to do, for they were each trapped in their own private horrors. As to who figured out how to banish the dark things no one knows, but someone had to stand up and face that thing that was their worst fear, to look at their nightmare in all of its horror and say, "I am not scared of you. You cannot harm me anymore."

He looked at the sea woman. "You tricked me." He didn't accuse, only stated.

Her gaze was sad. "No. You did this yourself. You wanted to come." He closed his eyes. *Had* he called her? Maybe his need...

*I wanted this...*

Dark air closed in around him as the sun's last rays vanished behind the horizon. Dark water closed over his head as the waves overpowered him, as she dragged him down, or... as he gave in.

So dark, so cold. But she was there, holding his hand. All around him the sea sang a dirge to his past and to his future. There was only now. No before, and there would be no after.

This... was right. He opened his eyes to the blue-black of a night dark sea. She floated close before him, a pale beacon in the inky flood. This was right. He pulled her to him, and their lips met halfway, icy cold against icy cold. This was right. Was he already dead?

*I feel so, so alive.*

Her song joined the distant voices of the sea, but hers was closer, deeper, vaster, darker, and at once, sweeter. "*Breathe...*" she whisper-sang to his mind, "*just breathe.*"

Air flooded his lungs from her open mouth as they sank further and further down. The surface vanished, there was no bottom, acres of water in every direction. His chest hurt, his skin hurt, his bones hurt. Crushed by the solid cold. *Dying... dying...* but so alive.



## Tree Line

by Tim Reed

A whisper whipped from the wind's wicked tongue licks the woman's ears with the sharpness of nipping teeth. Insidious portending is thinly layered through biting cold gusts and muffled by thunder's erratic roar.

Her legs churn with mechanical numbness, carrying her blindly through thick woodland. Blood spackles the side of her face as the notch above her left eye oozes steadily. She can feel the power of her heart pumping rapidly in the height of her gullet. Her mouth is dry and she can taste it in her breath. Senses are dulled by the raging adrenaline blocking the subtle synopsis that would let her feel the slashes in her skin as snagging branches rip flesh from flesh. She labors onward without prudence as primacy takes hold and feet move without consent..

Her thoughts totter in the shallows of liminal bays; broken images of a man and a life that could have been drift further and further into the deep.

A stampede of thunder and bright flashes of light startle her, renewing bitter plight as the agony of loss and mortal brevity steal the breath from her failing lungs.

Through the tumult, she hears the patterns of her footsteps mirrored, matching her labored pace. Her head swivels in a swift reflexive spasm. Her eyes strain in futility to see the menacing figures, but the darkness conceals its own. A branch grapples the back of her scalp and rips a new gash, claiming a fleshy dollop of hair and tissue, forcing her to abandon vain attempt at glimpsing these harbingers of death. Her eyes, once more ahead, flicker wildly to and from objects emerging from shifting shadows, seeking fervently for any intimation of escape from the craggy dense.

A deafening crack quakes through the intangible median of night as lighting assails a towering spine and the tree plummets downward. Alarmed, the woman stumbles into jagged landscape. The rocky terrain peels the skin from her palms and knees; a toll of passage. A shriek of pain passes the break of her lips. Blood seeps from exposed capillaries, pooling then trickling downward. She jumps to her feet in unnerved bedlam. Their steps are refocused and gaining ground.

Her head pivots rapidly, searching for direction or bearing. Again lighting explodes through the arboreal canopy, exposing a narrow path towards a thinning tree line.

Her weary legs take flight once more as the light concedes to cold black. Her path emulates a fleeting memory of momentary exposure. Fumbling dumbly around tapering trees, hoping to breach forest's threshold, she burdens onward.

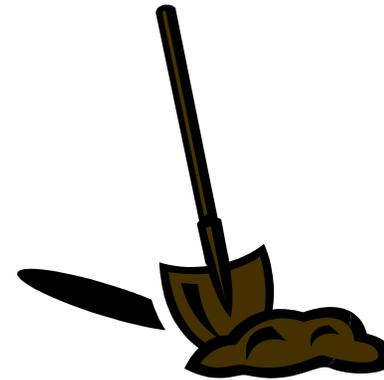
A torrent of tears, thus far walled, bursts through ducts, blurring already mea-

guy's. How dare she cheat on him?

Finally releasing his shirt from the bush, he made his way to her back porch, kicking over the clay pot and claiming her spare key.

Nate let himself into the kitchen. Slipping his shoes off, he silently made his way to the knife block on the counter—a sashimi knife, perfect. The laughter from the living room pulled him towards the room, an invisible chain linked between them that she was unknowingly reeling in.

“Julia,” she dropped the phone at the sound of his voice. The fear in her eyes as she turned caused excitement to course through his veins. He smiled. “Guess the next one will be different.”



## Infatuation

by AJ McCormick

The shovel blade plunged through the soft earth in a pleasingly smooth slice. Sweat trickled down Nate's spine as he tossed the dirt aside before driving the tool back into the earth. Today was the day. He was going to do it. Finally tell Julia how he felt, how crazy she drove him. His love for her was consuming, so excruciatingly potent that he could not keep his distance any longer. *Snick*—another slice, another toss of dirt. Yep, this was it. Whenever they were apart, it was like she was a phantom limb—he could always feel her there, then would be harshly reminded that they were apart. No more. He just had to finish this first. This last show of his devotion, and then they could be together forever. The clank of the shovel encountering an obstacle yanked his gaze towards the ground, and refocused his thoughts back to the task at hand.

Nate sighed as he took in his latest failure. The specifications had been perfect; it was the performance that had been decidedly lacking. Tossing the shovel next to the pile of dirt, he made his way to the side of the hole. Such a shame for all that time, all that effort, to go to waste. One hard shove with his foot and he was ready to move on with his life. On to his date with Julia. She would be different.

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It was official, Nate was whipped. Despite his objections, here they were watching a—he gulped—romantic comedy. But Nate couldn't be mad. Seeing Julia smile, her hand resting at the base of her delicate throat when she threw her head back to laugh, it was worth the blows to his masculinity to be witness to such happy abandon. He'd watch a 36-hour marathon of *The Notebook* if it just meant he got to be near such perfection. He gave her a knowing smile as she reached for the wine bottle—she was getting tipsy. On all their dates she always planned on 'just a glass or two', but that was never enough to last a full movie. Of course, then one movie ended up being two and so on until the next thing they both knew, it was 2 a.m. and she was well on her way to a hangover. He'd have to remind her—

The ringing of her phone cut off his thoughts. He glared at the device as she paused the movie. Who would dare interrupt their date? This was his time. He waited all week for this one night where she could get a break from the stress of her work and relax, let her guard down a little.

"Mike," the cheer in Julia's voice pulled his attention to her. "No, no you're not interrupting anything."

Nate gritted his teeth together. What was she thinking? The blood pounding in his ears drowned out the one-sided conversation. Nate rose from his seated position, his knees creaking in protest from sitting idle for so long. As he shoved his way out of the rose bushes, Julia's stupid thorn-laden shrubbery clasped his shirt. He cursed as he pricked his fingers trying to untangle himself. This was not how their date was supposed to go. She was his. *His*. Not this Mike

ger vision. The memory of a photograph claims her thoughts; man and woman in loving embrace. Anguished sobs accompany tears now coursing steadily into her mouth agape, carrying the salty bitterness of blood and heartbreak.

A nearby branch's snap wrenches her present. Eyes scan for origin but are thwarted by cloaking darkness once more. She begins to hearken the sound of booming surfs. A feeble haze of white seeps through the trees several hundred feet ahead. She labors more heavily with anticipation, rumbling with reckless abandon through the remaining gauntlet of trees. The faint glow becomes more steady and certain. A beach. The sandy open beckons to her; a homily of absolution from waking nightmare.

Elation momentarily distracts from looming threat, but the crackling of resolved footsteps, now all about, renews her apprehension. She lunges towards the line.

Lightning pierces dark, revealing a metallic shimmer. The transient sheen seals her fate as the blunt of an axe-head powers into her chest, grounding her. The pain is immense as she gulps for air. She can see them now. Three figures standing over her, maliciously poised.

"PLEASE?" she screams to no avail as the sky ignites once more and the deafening thunder gags her futile sobbing plea. Their motions are swift and absolute.

Gratified, they turn towards the tree line and amble steadily towards the waning glow of a dying beach fire.



## A Break

by Zachariah DeLong

"A break from routine," prescribed my mentor. A break indeed, but for me it was an escape from familiar faces now darkened with wary apprehension since the incident. I jumped at the opportunity to fill the vacancy of 'Night Watchman' at the university's art gallery.

Regardless of my rigorous schedule, time was always found to incorporate this route. Beauty of such color and vibrance always fed the eyes and enraptured the imagination. I lingered a moment before a fanciful scene of centaurs perusing a garden. I could almost smell the dew covered grass, feel the sunlight on—

Something halted me, barring the blissful experience. A detail, small, out of place. With each round it worsened and later haunted my dreams. Friends were useless when queried. They instead inquired after the incident leading up to my abrupt suspension and after my wellbeing, thinly veiled concern in their eyes.

Waving the day shift a hasty goodbye I rounded on my sanctuary, determined to wring enjoyment from within. But still the rapture was gone, inconsequential details spoiling the whole. Frustration led me to the delight of the night before. Warriors engaged in the maelstrom of battle and Carolus Rex on his dark steed. But still the peripheral incongruities nagged me.

Another morning and day of unrestful sleep found me wild-eyed and incompanyable. "I will not go mad over flickering shadows," I berated myself, resigned to merely serve my sentence.

This course served well, the wane of paranoia made the companionship of friends again possible for a time. But rounding a corner one night, my nightmares received fresh munitions. The 'woman in profile' smilingly seated for portrait, bathed in summer sun, was not smiling.

She was looking at me.

I know not how I returned to my room, nor how my clothing had tattered, my mind reeling in disbelief at what I had seen. I was scolded for leaving my post, the door standing open, but pity for an incident I could not even recall tainted every rebuke. It was decided another would accompany me.

It was the third round of the monstrous gallery. Feeling confident on the ebb of pleasant conversation, I ventured out alone whilst he relieved himself. A little ditty on my lips, my mind relieved at the prospect of a night's rest, I had all but made it through when there, peering at me like a wild-eyed vagrant through a window was a painted face contorted in horror!

Tears had pooled under my face when they found me. "It is just the incident," they reasoned, "still unsteady from before." But the tears streaking

my cheeks were not those born of terror, but those of utter relief. Finally, I knew what I must do.

I broke free of my locked room, out the window I crept on shaking legs and trembling hands and knees. I pitied the man slipping unconsciously from my hand to the floor, but I could not afford the distraction.

*"A break from routine."*

Each face twisted in horror at my approach. I tried to look away, but those eyes, each pair a glimpse of hell, their weight so burdensome! Twice my legs dumped me sobbing onto the cold slab, but each fall brought me closer, always closer to my goal.

*"Are you well?"*

I fell at the feet of my salvation, the end finally within reach. I cried so hard the breath and tears were racked from me in maddened torrents. When I had ripped the very last meal for fear and madness from my soul, I rose.

*"The door standing ajar?!"*

So twisted with iron and copulated with machine the beast took form! Rising from within it mocked me with tremors of its own, its gaze born of fire!

*"Still unsteady from the incident."*

Suddenly, I remembered. Memories flashed and I saw clearly what had befallen me so many weeks ago, and with that knowledge I drew a metalclad fist to the snarling metal monster within, and broke the mirror.

*"...still unsteady..."*

