

THE WORLD OF MYTH



MAGAZINE

HALLOWEEN, 2025
ISSUE 142

BALCOM
BARDY
BICKFORD
BINDI
BROODFOOT
DABROWSKI
DEBRAAL
GERBER
GOSSE
GRIM
KOTISIS
LAW
MACDONALD
MONTAYA
NEOGY
OWENS
RUMPEL



STORIES
POETRY
ARTWORK
REVIEWS
AND MUCH MORE!

OCT/25

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Masthead

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The World of Myth is published for anyone interested in quality Fantasy, Horror, Humor,
Action/Suspense, or Science Fiction and related genre materials. All issues are posted on the Web.

INTRODUCTION

Happy Halloween!

By: Stephanie J. Bardy



Stephanie J. Bardy

Stephanie J. Bardy is an accomplished author, poet and editor. She is Editor in Chief at *The World of Myth Magazine* and has held an editing position with them for over 5 years. She is also Editor in Chief for *The JayZoMon Dark Myth Company, LLC*.

Her published works include *Eternally Bound*, *Eternally Bound PCE Exclusive Edition*, *The Chosen*, *The World of Myth Anthology Volume 3*, *Full Moon & Howlin: A Werewolf Anthology*, *Monsterthology 2*, *Full Moon & Howlin: A Werewolf*, *The Chosen*, *Natural Instincts*, *The World of Myth Anthology Volume 4*, *Musing From Me*, *Unwelcomed: Stories of Hauntings and possessions*, *Penance* and *The Monster Within: Tales of A Tortured Mind*.

She has several short stories to her credit on *The World of Myth Magazine*, and several works of poetry.

*H*ello Mythketeers!

Well October has come and gone. Halloween has come and gone. The belly ache from all the candy has come and gone. But there is one constant. One thing that remains. The stories remain. Those wonderfully creepy, scary, most definitively Halloweeny stories, remain. They sat in my inbox. Some pleading, some mocking, but all of them demanding to be read, to be seen. Like any good story, it demands an audience just by the quality of the writing. So, even though we had made the decision to shift all of October's submissions to November, I changed my mind. I'm allowed. It's my prerogative. Now you're singing that song aren't you? If you're not, you're googling it. Tee-hee. Unlike our regular magazine, there is no Member of the Month. Each story, each poem, stands alone. Each one is wonderful in its own way. Each contributor in this Special Halloween issue is a Member of the Month just for taking the time to create something strictly for the season. It felt wrong to just let October go by and not put out an issue. I don't like inconsistency. Publishing all of October's stories in November, when we have just come off of

Remembrance Day in Canada and the U.S. is in their Thanksgiving season, felt like a cop out.

You all deserved more. The writers who put their hard work into the pieces you are about to read deserved better.

So I made the executive decision, informed our fearless leader, (I may have told him while he was heavily medicated, he's quite entertaining teehee) that we were putting out two issues in November. One early on, with all the Halloween stuff, and one on our regular publication date. He agreed immediately saying that was a wonderful idea. Again, he was heavily medicated. Back surgery and all.

But, even with a clear head, he still agreed.

And now, I present to you...

Our Halloween Special Edition.

Thank you for your patience, your unwavering understanding and your support of our little magazine. This is my tribute to you. My thank you for all your hard work, your dedication and your passion for the written word.

We are just blank pages on a screen without your contribution.

So, sit back, enjoy and again, from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Until the next one,

Stephanie J. Bardy

Stephanie J Bardy
Editor of gratitude and appreciation

Drabble & Flash

Halloween Curse

By: James Rumpel



James Rumpel

James Rumpel is a recently retired high school math teacher who has greatly appreciated spending some of his newfound free time rekindling his love for science fiction and the written word. Writing also provides him with an excellent opportunity to ignore the household chores his wife assigns. He lives in Wisconsin with his forgiving wife, Mary.

Larry read the ancient tome one more time.

"It clearly says that at midnight on Halloween night the curse takes effect and everyone in the graveyard will be transformed into whatever costume they are wearing."

"You mean, people will be turned into zombies or vampires or witches?" asked Carl. "We have to move the frat's party. We can't risk holding it in the graveyard."

"I have a better idea," said Larry, opening his laptop and finding the COSTUME WAREHOUSE site.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm ordering every millionaire, movie star, and naughty nurse costume I can get my hands on."

Drabble & Flash

Healthy Skin

By: Gabriella Balcom



Gabriella Balcom

Gabriella Balcom, who is from Texas, writes fantasy, horror/thriller, romance, sci-fi, and more. She likes traveling, music, photography, great stories, history and movies. Gabriella says she loves forests, mountains, and back roads. She has a weakness for lasagna, garlic bread, tacos, cheese and chocolate. Check out her author page:

<https://facebook.com/GabriellaBalcom.lonestarauthor>

Lorelei leaned against the back of

the tub, a pleased "ahhhh" escaping her lips. The hot liquid she'd prepared for her bath lapped at her body. Her muscles relaxed, lingering tension melting away, replaced by contentment and happiness. She stretched, luxuriating, and took a deep breath, inhaling the amazing scent. It was powerful, rich and spicy, and she loved it like nothing else. Cupping her hands, she scooped up the creamy liquid, and sipped.

The blood rushed over her tongue, and she shivered at the deliciousness of it. The full moon of All Saints' Eve made it especially potent, and her fangs immediately descended.

No only was blood the mainstay of Lorelei's diet, but she regularly drained it from certain victims, the tastier ones, so she could bathe in it, too. After all, caring for her skin was important, wasn't it?

The End

Drabble & Flash

Skeletons-R-Us

By: Cheryl-lya
Broadfoot



Cheryl-lya Broadfoot

Poet, writer, ex-dancer, current mover of mountains with a pen.

Cheryl-lya Broadfoot has been dabbling in writing on and off for over a decade with some works published. She enjoys life at the coast, inspired by the North Sea's ebbs and flows. In the real-world Cheryl-lya is a Project Manager and Coach but much prefers the world of fantasy. As such more magic and myths are on their way, watch out!

Why destroy the planet

with plastic human skeletons when perfectly naturally sourced ones are so readily available? We can provide you any type, any shape, and for an extra \$24.99, we'll throw in the old bones of a familiar too.

Here at Skeletons R Us, we've got all your Halloween needs. A one-stop shop that has the purest of pure bones for your witching hour treats.

But don't take our word alone. Tricky Tricia, Witch of the Celts, has given us a 5-star Trusted Pilot-Light review.

She says: *"I got the cleanest maggot-free bones for my potions from Skeletons R Us. Made them humans chuckle to their death. Other places never take the care and pains to bleach their bones. Oh, and they made the best spells ever."*

Warlock, Adverse Alan, gave us a 4.5 star rating, saying: *" 'ere, mate, brewed me a pot o' luck*

so pure all them zombies partied to hard rock music for three months straight. Skeletons R Us are more than just a bag of bones."

Did you know we do more than just pure natural skeletons? We have the freshest spells ingredients like wolfsbane, not the knockoff wolves-pain variety. Want your charms to protect at extra high levels?

Get a hit of our electric wands. Your enemies won't stand a chance, and werewolves are zapped into a were-a-wolf with one zap.

Yep, we are your first port of call for the freshest of fresh ritual ingredients. Please don't cast half-ar*ed spells. It's a pure hit from us, only the finest natural ingredients.

You can connect with us by dialling into the Matrix on 666-skeletons-r-us. Remember, save the planet, use only naturally sourced skeletons and ingredients this Halloween.

Drabble & Flash

The Haunted Castle

*By: Christopher T.
Dabrowski*



Christopher T. Dabrowski

Christopher T. Dabrowski is a Polish writer and screenwriter. His books have been published in Poland, the USA, Canada, Spain, Germany and India.

Josh didn't believe in ghosts, so he fearlessly set out to explore the haunted castle ruins. Nothing happened until he came across a female phantom in one of the tunnels. "A white lady" he muttered. "Anyone, but no lady." He turned on his heel and fled. He reached the door and tugged on the handle. It was locked... The phantom was right behind him. "Relax, you don't have to open it for me." she announced. "I advocate equality, and can easily penetrate matter." "AAAAA!" shouted terrified. "And you don't have to fear me. I'm just a hologram in your game."

Children's Literature

Trick-or-Treating with an Alien

By: Peggy Gerber



Peggy Gerber

Peggy Gerber is a poet and short story writer from northern New Jersey who is thrilled beyond words to have been chosen as the winner of the 2021 *Open Contract Challenge*. Her poetry chapbook *Stumbling in CrazyTown* will be published shortly and she is grateful to each and every person who was involved in the process. She is also very proud to have had one of her stories chosen for the anthology, *Natural Instincts: Tales of Witches and Warlocks*.

Martin was a bonafide science geek. While other eleven-year-old boys might be playing sports or video games, he was in his backyard with a pair of binoculars searching the night sky for aliens. He had read quite a bit about extraterrestrials coming to Earth and was confident one day they would return. He was right. On the morning Martin heard there were drones flying over his city, his ears perked up. He listened closely as the newscaster described the flying objects as being as big as cars with bright blinking lights. When it was reported they could not be identified, his heart began to race. Martin ran to his mother shouting, "Mom, it's happening. The aliens have come to Earth, and I need to get ready to greet them. Can I please sleep in the backyard tonight?" "Martin," his mother snapped, "don't be ridiculous. There are literally hundreds of other explanations to explore." She

looked at her son's eager face and a lump formed in her throat. He was small for his age, had insulin dependent diabetes and didn't have any friends. Though she didn't want to encourage his fantasy life, she also didn't want to wipe the beautiful smile off his face, so she came up with a compromise.

"How about this Martin? I'll let you stay out in the backyard an extra hour tonight, as long as you do all your homework first." "Two hours," Martin begged. "One and a half."

Martin squealed with delight and gave his mother a hug. At school that day, all Martin could think about were the drones. He spent his time in math class debating whether his backyard might be a good place to meet an alien. His yard had a large green lawn, a six-foot fence for privacy, and it was in a quiet neighborhood, so he concluded it was okay. Especially since he had a plan to contact them directly.

When the final bell rang, Martin raced out of the building and

headed to the grocery store to buy Reese's Pieces. He figured if ET loved the candy, it would be prudent to have some on hand. He wasn't under any illusions, he understood ET was a fictional character, but he had read somewhere that movies were often based on facts, and he wasn't taking any chances. Lucky for him it was almost Halloween, and all the candy was on sale. He had enough of his allowance left over to buy two bags. Later that afternoon, after finishing his homework, Martin grabbed a picnic blanket, his dad's most powerful flashlight, and filled a bowl with candy. He laid everything out in the backyard and sat down with his book of Morse code. He had a gut feeling the drones' blinking lights were some sort of signal, so he wanted to be ready. As the sun dipped below the horizon, Martin held his binoculars to his eyes with one hand and pulsed the flashlight with his other. He was sending out the message, "Welcome to Earth."

And then he came.

The small spaceship landed next to Martin's blanket, cloaked and invisible. As it touched down, a powerful whoosh of air almost knocked Martin over. Upon turning to investigate, Martin's mouth dropped open as a strange creature began climbing

out of the invisible spaceship, one body part at a time. When it was fully emerged, a smile lit up Martin's face and he said, "Welcome to my planet."

Slowly, Martin began approaching the alien, studying him from all angles. He noted the alien was around his size, with green lizard skin, large black eyes, a hole where the nose should be and a small roundish mouth. He was wearing a white cloak, like something out of a Star Wars movie, and had one hand in his pocket. Martin gulped as it crossed his mind for a split second the alien might be reaching for a weapon, but the thing he pulled out looked more like a small phone.

Feeling relieved, Martin held out his hand in greeting and the alien flicked out his long green tongue and licked it. Martin flinched but then reciprocated by licking the alien's scaly appendage. It's only polite, he thought. Now bonded, the two sat down on the blanket. Martin took a deep breath and looked the alien in the eyes, "There must have been thousands of people sending out signals, why did you choose to visit me?"

The alien held up the small phone-like device, and it translated his high-pitched chirping into English. His

message was, "It's because you welcomed me joyfully, I knew you would cause no harm."

Martin reached behind his back and presented the alien with the bowl of Reese's Pieces. He popped a couple in his mouth to demonstrate what to do, and the alien followed suit. As the alien flicked the candy with his tongue, his black eyes lit up and he began chirping exuberantly, grabbing handfuls of the chocolaty treat.

Martin beamed as he poured more Reese's Pieces into the bowl, delighted he had thought of it. For the next hour and a half, the boy and the alien sat together on the blanket, slowly getting to know each other and learning each other's customs.

The alien instructed Martin to call him Friend, and Martin requested he do the same. Time passed quickly, and all too soon Martin's mother called for him to get ready for bed. He turned to the alien and said, "Hey, "I have to go now, but tomorrow's Halloween and it would mean a lot to me if you'd come trick-or-treating with me. I think you'll love it. You'll get a ton of earth candy to bring back home."

As Martin waited for the alien's answer, a frown crossed his face, "It used to be my favorite holiday, but my stupid diabetes ruined it. Still, it's fun to go out

and see all the different costumes and Mom lets me eat some of the chocolates." Martin crossed his fingers for luck, "So will you come with me?"

Friend took a few more Reese's Pieces and shook his head yes. Arrangements were made and they said good-night.

Martin ran into the house bubbling over with excitement. "Mom," he shouted, "did you see? He was really here. An alien came to our backyard."

Martin's mom sighed and shook her head. She was at a Zoom meeting all night and hadn't had a chance to peek out the back window. She knew Martin was home from the mess he left in the kitchen so she didn't worry. Now as she listened to him, she wasn't sure whether she should reprimand him or make a therapy appointment. She chose the former and as she began to scold him for lying, she noticed the almost empty bowl of candy. She gasped in horror and rolled up his sleeve to check his blood sugar monitor.

"I didn't eat the candy, Mom, I'm not stupid. I gave it to the alien." Relief pulsed through her when she saw his numbers were normal. She took a deep breath and murmured, "Go to bed and we'll talk tomorrow after I get home from work."

The next day after school, Martin raced home and slipped

into his ET costume. He grabbed two shopping bags from the closet and went into the backyard with his flashlight. "Are you ready?" he pulsed into the sky.

A few minutes later, there was a whoosh of air and Friend appeared. Martin smiled and handed him an empty bag. Together they walked down Main Street stopping off at houses and collecting candy. They developed a routine.

Martin would knock on the door saying trick or treat, and the alien would chirp when the door was opened. Everyone commented how great their costumes were and their bags quickly filled with candy.

As the sun set, Martin's mother texted it was time to come home. Martin's face fell when he read the message and he hesitated before texting back, "Ok." When he turned to tell Friend the sad news, he spotted the school bully walking towards him.

"Hi dumbass," Billy said. "I see you found a lame friend to join you this year." He walked up to Martin and yanked off his ET head. He lifted him up by his shirt collar and said, "How about you and your little buddy give me all your candy, and nobody will get hurt."

A lump formed in Martin's throat as he felt Billy's hot

breath on his face. He wanted to be brave, but he had been beaten up by Billy before and it was no joke. He looked at the ground and handed over his candy.

"Next," Billy said. He grabbed the alien and tried to yank off his head. Billy tugged and tugged, and by the time he realized it was not a mask, the alien had become enraged. He made a high-pitched chirping sound and a green phlegm-like substance shot out of the hole where a nose should be. It tore through Billy's Superman costume, like fire turning the material to ash. Billy was left wearing only a Superman cape and underwear. Even his shoes were gone. Billy stood stunned for a moment before realizing he was practically naked. He dropped Martin's bag of candy and took off running like a rocket. Kids began calling after him, "Hey look, it's Captain Underpants." As the kids began to laugh, Martin joined in and pretty soon he was practically doubled over. He turned to his new buddy and said, "Thanks, that was amazing."

The two friends walked towards Martin's house chatting about the situation with Billy. "There are some really terrible people on your planet," Friend said. "It's not like that where I come from." "Yeah," answered Martin. "Tell

me about it.”

Back in his yard, Martin stood for a few minutes looking at his new friend and feeling sad. A tear trickled down his face and he said, “I wish you could stay a little longer. This has been the best day of my life. The only thing that could make it more perfect would be if my diabetes disappeared.”

The alien grabbed something from his pocket, wrapped his scaly arms around Martin and pressed a metallic gadget against his middle. Martin felt a twinge behind his stomach and let out a loud, “Oof.”

“Wish granted.”

Martin furrowed his brows in confusion and returned the hug. He murmured, “You’ve been a great friend. I’m going to really miss you. Will you be back?”

“I don’t think so, but your kindness has restored my faith in your planet.”

Friend clutched his bag of candy, waved to Martin and climbed into his spaceship. He uncloaked it for just a minute, so Martin could watch it soar into the atmosphere.

Three months later, Martin’s mother handed him a copy of *The New England Journal of Medicine*. In it was a case study of an eleven-year-old boy who spontaneously recovered from

Type 1 diabetes.

“Show me the picture again,” said his mother.

Martin pulled out his phone and showed her the one picture Friend had allowed him to take.

“I still don’t understand,” his mother said as she kissed the picture. “But I don’t care.”

Fantasy

I've Waited

By: Gabriella Balcom



Gabriella Balcom

Gabriella Balcom, who is from Texas, writes fantasy, horror/thriller, romance, sci-fi, and more. She likes traveling, music, photography, great stories, history and movies. Gabriella says she loves forests, mountains, and back roads. She has a weakness for lasagna, garlic bread, tacos, cheese and chocolate. Check out her author page:

<https://facebook.com/GabriellaBalcom.lonestarauthor>

Zanzia opened the bottle, looked

inside, shook it gently, and raised it to her nose, taking a sniff. She winced, screwed the cap back on, and put it in the box. She pulled a baggie out next, removed some of the contents, and studied them. Putting them in the bag again, she tossed it into the container. Opening a small carton, she caught sight of the shriveled plant inside, and touched the desiccated leaves ever so gently before closing the lid and discarding the container. She gave two others the same treatment. After rummaging through the remaining items, she sighed and turned around, brows deeply furrowed. “You’re kidding, right?” she asked. “Is this some kind of joke?”

Kynton blinked at her, expression revealing his confusion. “No,” he finally replied. “Of course not. Why do you ask?”

“You *can't* expect me to use this.”

“Why not?”

“It’s a collection of junk.”

“No, it isn’t.” She said nothing. “What’s wrong with the things I brought?” he demanded. “They’re what you asked for, straight off your list.”

“Nothing in this box is fresh. Not even one of the items. I figure some are weeks or months old, maybe older than that. A couple smell moldy.”

“You should be grateful for my efforts, not complaining,” Kynton snapped, his brown eyes narrowing. “Do you have any idea how hard it was for me to get some of that?”

“Yes.” Zanzia snorted and rolled her eyes. “But this stuff is practically worthless. If you used your brains, you’d know that. And who constantly brags he can get anything at any time? *You*, that’s who.” She added, “Do you recall what you told me? I do. You said, ‘Of *course* I can get you the things you need. Of *course* it won’t be a problem. Nothing is beyond my reach. And of *course* I can have everything within the time period you said.’ You added on extra for certain ingredients, too.”

Kynton snatched a bottle out of the box and held it up. “You said you needed lotus. Here’s the lotus.” He got out another item. “You wanted flowers and I got the blasted flowers. I even got more than one kind.”

“Yes, you did. But only two are the types I asked you for, and both of those are old. Flowers aren’t all the same. They’re different inside, with varying consistencies and properties, and they can do different things. One variety can’t be substituted for another. I have to have specific kinds for my spells to work the way I need them to. I asked for Blue Lotus, but you brought me white. I asked for...” “Blue Lotus is quite rare,” he said, interrupting her. “It doesn’t grow in the United States and I couldn’t

exactly fly to Egypt to get you some from there.”

“I know it's rare. We discussed that, along with other things, when I gave you my list and the extra money you wanted. But now you're playing dumb and I have neither the desire nor the patience to deal with this. You've wasted enough of my time, and I still need the ingredients. The *correct* ones. If I hadn't relied on you, I could've already gotten what I need elsewhere. Now give me back what I paid. I won't be using you again.”

“Good riddance.” Kynton stalked over to his container, grabbed it, turned to walk away, but sneered over his shoulder. “You can forget about getting your money back. I'm keeping every last cent to pay for my efforts. And I'm going to tell everyone what you really are, you miserable, cold-blooded...”

Baring her teeth, Zanzia snarled, pointed a finger at him, and began to chant. His body instantly rose a couple feet off the ground, and he dropped the box. “Ignoramus,” she said. “You should've known better than to insult a witch to her face. And making threats to one shows you're a special kind of stupid.”

“Let me go this instant,” he demanded. His body jerked as he struggled to break free of her spell. “You have no right to prevent me from leaving. You better listen to me and do what I say. I'm warning you to release me and...” He abruptly fell silent and bit his lip. “What are you doing to me? I'm having a hard time moving my mouth now, and my body's tingling all over. It almost feels as if I'm going numb.”

“There's a reason for that. You *are* going numb. I can't have you resisting, can I? Unlike you, I always think ahead and consider the possibilities. I

anticipated you might be a problem, but that didn't matter, because I needed you.” She eyed her captive and gave him a small smile. “You see, there's one very important ingredient I didn't put on my list. But I'm about to get it all the same.”

Kynton paled when she picked up a knife and poked one of her fingertips with the tip, drawing a bead of blood. “What are you doing with that?” he questioned. “Hey, I admit I overreacted earlier. I shouldn't have said what I did. But I didn't really mean any of it and I'm sorry.” She said nothing as she strode over to him. “Whatever you're thinking of doing with that, please don't,” he begged. “*Please!*”

Zanzia ignored him and his pleas became more and more frantic. He whimpered when she reached out, easily pried open his mouth, and pulled out his tongue. Without hesitating, she sliced it off. Turning it this way and that, she studied it, a pleased smirk crossing her face. “Fresh human tongue is hard to come by,” she said conversationally, unmoved by his tears and the blood bubbling from his lips as he wailed. She turned away to toss his tongue into her cauldron, after which she pointed at him once again. His body began to shrink, while his skin changed into a dusky gray. His yells grew fainter and fainter, tapering away into nothingness, and a slug soon floated in the air where the man had been. It hung there a couple seconds before dropping to the earth. She stepped on the slug, squished him into sludge, and carefully scraped his remnants off the bottom of her shoe and into her cauldron. Once she'd stirred her concoction, she headed for her garden, where she dug up fresh worms, oleander root, and hemlock for her mix. She added dried green

moss and wolfsbane from her stores, along with a rattlesnake eye, bird feathers, fur from various animals, bark and dried leaves from several trees, three-day-old ash from her fireplace, and other items. But she wasn't done yet. She needed more ingredients.

Zanzia walked into her back yard and stopped beside a small fountain. Holding her palms a few inches above the placid, crystal-clear water, she concentrated, her brows furrowing. Images began to appear on the surface one after another. These were the things she still required. She memorized their locations and recited another spell.

Time passed and an object appeared in the distance, speeding through the air toward her. Others followed within moments. The desiccated heart of a powerful sorceress who'd died hundreds of years earlier reached the witch first, followed by the sorceress' bones and locks of her hair. Next, a dead vampire bat arrived, along with a liver, rabid squirrel, Blue Lotus blossoms, and berries from specific plants and trees.

And now it was time for the final ingredients, the most important ones. She'd put off getting them until last. Zanzia strode through the woods toward a graveyard on the very edge of town. When she heard voices coming from somewhere off to her left, she waved her hands in the air, cloaking herself with invisibility. This specific spell wouldn't last very long, but should allow her enough time for what she needed to do, and she picked up her pace.

Two individuals stood at burial sites in the cemetery when she arrived, but their presence didn't bother her in the slightest. Confident her magic was strong, her spells true, she ignored

the people, and turned her focus to the task at hand. She began another incantation, murmuring this one under her breath, and extended her invisibility to encompass a cluster of the closest graves. She gestured toward one of them, and the ground vibrated, but only a little. Clumps of dirt started moving on top before churning. A hint of something dark appeared in their midst and a bone rose from the soil. Zanzia motioned, and it floated over to her, after which she plucked it from the air. She removed a piece of material from a cloth bag she'd brought with her, wrapped up her booty, and placed it inside the bag.

Turning to look at another grave, she repeated the same steps, and slowly made her way from one section of the cemetery to another and another. The people already present there, along with others who arrived now and then, saw nothing, heard nothing, and eventually walked away, unaware anything out of the ordinary had occurred.

Time passed as Zanzia visited several of the burial sites, after which she left the area altogether, and strode toward another one several hundred yards away. She looked around when she arrived, and her eyes narrowed, face darkening ominously. Unlike the previous site, this one was badly neglected and in poor condition, overrun by numerous brambles and weeds. Heaps of trash had been dumped all over the place, some old, some more recent, and rotten smells permeated the air. People were also buried in this area, although it was anything but obvious. No stones or identifying markers showed where the dead lay, and nobody ever visited them. Nobody but her, at least. She gritted her teeth, clenched her

jaws, and fumed a few moments before pointing at the soil to her left. It shifted slightly and a bone rose into the air. Unlike the others she'd collected first, this one was quite small. She kissed it before wrapping it in fine cloth and placing it gently in another bag she had with her. Then she collected and secured two more bones, adult ones this time, from a nearby patch of earth.

That night, Zanzia went outside, nodding in satisfaction when she saw the blood moon hanging in the sky above her. It was extremely rare for one to occur, especially on the night before Halloween, and she'd been awaiting it for months now. The planets were perfectly aligned to make her plans a success.

First, she got an athame from her home, a special one handed down through generations of her ancestors. Using it, she traced precise patterns on the ground. Next, she positioned candles of various colors around herself in the shape of a pentagram. She sliced her palm and dribbled blood in specific spots here and there. She faced the north, rang a bell, bowed, did the same thing while facing south, and repeated her actions in each of the other directions.

Turning now to face the nearby forest, she weaved an intricate design in the air with her hands, and started to chant:

"North wind, south wind, listen well.
East wind, west wind, heed my spell.
Absent sun, your power you must send
for I need every portion you can lend.
Moon, now high above me in the sky,
grant me power in response to my cry.
You know why I have need of thee.
Do my bidding now. So I mote it be."
After calling upon the earth and oceans, she invoked the name of the long-dead sorceress whose bones,

heart, and hair she'd obtained. The air pulsed with power as the ancient one appeared, nodding her approval before vanishing.

Zanzia then changed her focus, and began a new chant:

"Serpents large and serpents small,
I command you come, one and all.
Frogs, toads, reptiles, I bid of thee —
emerge right now and come to me.
Plants with berry, plants with leaf,
trees young or aged beyond belief,
creatures young, old, large, small,
heed my summons. Heed my call.
Wait not. Each of you I demand to see,
so come to me now. So I mote it be."
Before she even stopped speaking, animals of all different sizes emerged from the woods. Bobcats, coyotes, deer, bears, panthers, wild pigs, badgers, and more. Trees, bushes, and vines also appeared, walking upright, their lower stems or trunks divided into two halves that functioned as legs.

Alligators crawled out, followed by slithering snakes, crawling possums and rats, hopping frogs and toads, and swarms of beetles, ants, worms, and insects. Poisonous fish had also come to the sorceress' call. However, at this point they walked on their tails, which were split in half, and were able to breathe above water, as did the other amphibious beings. Birds flew around her head, joined by clouds of flies, mosquitoes, bees, hornets, and more flying things.

Facing the creatures surrounding her, Zanzia addressed them. "I've waited for this night for most of my life. Years and years. Time has passed but I didn't forget and my memories have never dimmed. The townspeople robbed me of my mother. They robbed me of my father and sister. My entire family was eradicated as if they

were nothing. As if they didn't matter. My parents were sorcerers, but they hurt no one. They were good and kind people, helped anyone in need, and lived peacefully. And my sister was naught but a child scant years older than I was. The vindictive filth in town have gotten away with murder. They've enjoyed their lives and multiplied many times over, while I've been forced to endure the loss of my loved ones, missing them and mourning them every single day. The townspeople acted as if they did me a favor, taking me to live where they did, and treating me like a clueless pet. But I've carried my hatred deep in my belly and the marrow of my bones. They thought I was too small to worry about. Too small to fear. Too young to remember. But I saw and heard every single thing that happened. I've kept my power a secret all these years, and it's done naught but grow."

Striding in front of the massed life forms, she headed for the town, her army on her heels.

When they reached the outskirts, she brought them to a halt, and gave succinct instructions for them to cause as much pain and destruction as possible — anything short of death — and they swarmed forward.

Screams soon rang out from every direction.

Zanzia faced the Town Council herself, and they fell to their knees before her. "This is Halloween, a time to have fun and celebrate," they cried out. "It's a time for laughter and merriment, not anger."

"Fun? Laughter?" Her face darkened. "You'll *never* have that again."

"Remember the mercy we showed you," they begged.

"*Mercy!*" she raged. "I'll show you mercy and a Halloween you'll never

forget." She cast the spell she'd designed especially for them. Their bodies burst into flames, flesh and bones steadily burning. Zanzia smiled as they wailed and shrieked in agony. And, when their bodies healed, then started burning all over again, her smile widened.

The End

Fantasy

The Annual Ritual Set Forth by the Apparition of Baron Willoughby

By: Lisa H. Owens



Lisa H. Owens

Lisa H. Owens, a former monthly humorist columnist, resides in North Texas with two rescue dogs, some failing houseplants and a possum named Harry, who's had a cozy burrow beneath the backyard storage shed since he was a leggy adolescent. Her multi-genre work has been published in various media outlets and narrated on horror podcasts. She's not afraid of spiders and snakes and her stories often include family secrets. Visit her website for more: www.lisahowens.com

The apparition of Baron

Willoughby floated above the dilapidated staircase. He emitted an eerie glow as his good eye blinked, clearing a fine layer of attic dust, before assessing the mutated villagers cowering at the foot of the stairs, their wares on display. The stakes were high; therefore, he couldn't be hasty in his decision-making—yet he must not dawdle. The neglected grandfather clock was aroused, its clipped tick-tock instilling urgency in the ancient ghost as it did every year on the celebratory eve that opened a door into the spirit world.

The baron's milky left eye gazed skyward, as it often did, aloof, a thick gob of gray crust collecting in its clotted tear-duct. His right eye, the good eye, the wizen brown one, swept across the wide array of contenders. Its dark iris, flecked with amber, gleamed as it considered the merits of each youthful peasant, hunkered and quaking before the hideous form of the Baron's manifestation.

The good eye paused, momentarily focusing on the werewolf. Though small in stature, it had strong, sharp teeth and toted a hefty package, but the creature's aura was cloudy, its head befuddled with childish nonsense. Poisonous inner-workings,

the brown-eye reckoned.

It blinked again, refocusing, in turn, ruling out each candidate for one reason or another. This late in the evening, the sack the pirate held in his quaking hands should be overflowing with spoils and bounty. Yet it hung limp and flat resting upon the seaman's splintered peg-leg.

The brown-eye continued its quest, critically viewing the vast array of details in each and every villager. The shriveled mummy stood in a slump-shouldered stance, abashed, his gauze-wrapped hands hanging limp at his sides. How dare this flaccid, loosely preserved human present empty-handed.

"MUMMY," Baron Willoughby shouted, "SCOOT!"

The roar of displeasure, emanating from deep within the apparition of Baron Willoughby's core, caused his thickened lips to split and dribble rivulets of black ichor. The mummy jolted as a heinous breath washed over it. Gauze unfurled, streaming behind the departing figure, as it stumbled across acres of warped hardwood floors covered in the feces of vermin and debris wrought hundreds of years of neglect. The ear-piercing screech of rusted hinges, followed by the slam of a warped oak door that was once considered the grandest entryway in the land, finally announced its exit.

The brown-eye came to rest on the wiry cowboy and the lips spewed,

“You!”

The baron outstretched his withered arm, gnarled index finger accusatory as tattered silken sleeves fluttered in the October winds sifting through crumbling walls of stone.

“Show me your candy, Cowboy,” words, thickened by disuse, cajoled.

The cowboy stepped forward, his silver spurs jangling, and upended his jack-o-lantern bucket. Candy flowed unencumbered, forming a colorful pile of sweet-sweet treats and one undesirable green apple, its flesh bruised by the harsh conditions on the long trek from the outlying village to the castle.

“Aaah, yaass,” the lips whispered as the stomach growled its approval.

The milky-eye finally stirred, its clump of goo dislodging to plop on the third riser, as it rolled forward to focus on the towering bounty. Its slow blink affirmed what the brown-eye suspected. A good haul, indeed.

Enough sweet-sweet treats to get them through another year.

Fantasy

The Mask of Remembrance

By: Jayant Neogy



Jayant Neogy

Writer, Photographer and Traveler, I have a Master's Degree in Engineering from Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur followed by 40 years of work experience in India, Germany, Switzerland and the US.

Thereafter, I had over 5 years of teaching and consultancy experience.

As an author of non-fiction, 9 of my books have been published in India so far.

I write fiction for Substack, Medium, Wattpad and Tumblr.

The vendor pressed a bundle into her hands before she could refuse. "You carry this," he hissed. "Or you don't leave."

Elena glanced past him to the marigold petals scattered along the market floor. Candles flickered, skeletons danced on balconies, and the air tasted of sugar and smoke.

Guadalajara on the eve of the Day of the Dead had always stood halfway between this world and the next—and tonight, that boundary was paper-thin. She gripped the cloth-wrapped bundle. It was too heavy for sweets, too soft for comfort. Contraband, maybe?

"I don't know you," she said evenly. "I don't want this."

"Doesn't matter what you want," the man behind her muttered. "You owe us, lady." Mistaken identity? She thought as her mind came instantly alert.

Two shapes closed the rear alley. Panic flickered, but she smothered it. She had crossed too many borders to stop being the woman who needed rescuing. If this were a mistake, it wouldn't be hers. But before she could act, there was an interruption.

A shadow slipped between her and danger—a man in a black mask, voice smoky but full, like mezcal.

"Gentlemen," he drawled. "Surely, the dead aren't the only ones we show

courtesy tonight."

With a dancer's grace, the masked man moved, dodging the first blow, then retaliating with one of his own, flooring one. The other man ran. Turning to her, the masked stranger gently took the bundle from her and dropped it behind the counter.

"I'm sure it wasn't for you," he said, brushing his gloves, as if completing a ritual.

"Are you hurt?"

"No." Elena's voice was steady, though her pulse was drumming. "Who are you?"

"A friend," he said lightly. "For tonight, your dance partner."

Tilting her head to look up, Elena said, "With that mask, you look like Zorro."

"Only to special people." She almost laughed. Was he serious or playing a part?

He offered his hand. She took it after a brief hesitation. Something in her wanted to. His palm felt cool, rather bony, but his grip was firm.

They meandered through the crowds and walked toward Avenida Chapultepec, where music spilled from cafés and paper banners fluttered like lost souls seeking a home.

Towering Catrinas leaned from balconies; their skeletal grins flickering in candlelight. Elena breathed freely for the first time that night.

As they passed store windows, she couldn't see his reflection. She blinked. "Perhaps a trick of light?" she thought. The masked one noticed her hesitation.

“You’re not afraid?” he asked.
 “I was fearful once; now I think fear’s overrated.”
 She thought he smiled behind the mask.
 “Then let’s trade fear for music, for rhythm.”
 At a plaza near the fountains, a band was playing. Without a word, he drew her into the music. The crowd’s laughter blurred into Mariachi beats. His steps were tireless, graceful; hers began uncertain but steadied. She remembered she had once loved this city, known how to respond to its rhythm. While yielding to the beat, she wondered why people glanced at her curiously but looked right through her partner.
 When they finally paused at a street vendor’s stall, he paid with coins dulled by time. The vendor accepted them wordlessly, as though this were routine, especially on the Day of the Dead. He watched her eat, but neither ate nor drank.
 Elena raised a brow. “Not hungry?”
 “Lightness is best for dancing.” His tone held no irony—just quiet assurance. She watched a faint shimmer of candlelight at his collar. For a heartbeat, she thought she glimpsed bone beneath flesh. She wasn’t sure if he led her, but they wandered into the old cemetery, Panteón de Belén, where families picnicked beside graves and held murmured conversations with their dead. The air smelled of wax and fruit and smoke.
 She remembered giving the cemetery a wide berth earlier, but it seemed to fit their mood on the Day of the Dead. She clutched his hand firmly and entered without qualms.
 “This is my favorite place,” he said.
 “The dead are uncomplicated, honest.”

Elena agreed as she thought of the man she’d left in New York—the reason she’d come here, chasing her younger self.
 They moved past gayly decorated graves, lit with candles, heaped with offerings. He led her past them to a dark corner, to a forgotten headstone mottled with lichen. No candles, no offerings. The name carved there — Alejandro de la Vega, 1910 — sent a tremor through her; she couldn’t say why.
 “You knew him?”
 A faint smile, felt rather than seen, curved beneath the mask.
 “In a manner of speaking.” His voice had changed — softer, older.
 Standing at the grave, she traced the worn name with her thumb. The night sounds seemed to fade away. She realized—this day wasn’t about the dead at all, but for a choice by the living, what to hold on to, and what to let go. She shivered. Something about the abandoned grave and his stillness unsettled her. The longer they stood there, the colder and bonier his hand became.
 “What are you?” she asked.
 He looked toward the rows of flickering candles lining the graves.
 “A leftover, an echo. Perhaps a forgotten promise that has outlived its purpose.” He added, speaking low, “Every city keeps one. Tonight, Guadalajara remembers me.”
 Elena opened her mouth to speak, but he had already turned away, moving toward the gates as the bells of the cathedral tolled midnight. Their sound carried, rolling through the air like time itself, marking what endured and what was ready to pass.
 They walked back through narrow streets, where dancers spun and fireworks sparked and cracked. His silence deepened, and his outline

shimmered at the edges.
 “What’s happening? Do you have to go?” she said.
 “Oh, I was never supposed to stay.”
 At her hotel’s revolving door, he stopped. His eyes, visible beneath the mask’s shifting light, were dark bottomless pools.
 “I go no further,” he said.
 “What if I falter?”
 A bony, narrow fingertip brushed her cheek.
 “Then remember what you are.”
 His skin felt cool, but not cold—like marble once warmed in sunlight. She blinked—and he was gone.
 Inside, the doorman frowned. “Señorita, you came in alone.”
 For an instant, the reflection on the glass door held two figures—hers, and a faint silhouette with a mask of black silk. Then it vanished. For an instant, she thought she heard a low voice murmur in her ear: *Remember what you are*. She could have doubted everything. Instead, she touched her cheek where his finger had rested and murmured, “I’ll remember.” She turned back to where the music played and the city beckoned. She smiled, not because she believed in ghosts, but because that night, anything was possible. She whispered to no one in particular.
 “I already do.”
 Then she stepped into the music—creating her own rhythm — steady, untroubled, alive.

The End

She set out for a party
in the woods, but what
she found was a dark
Castle a dangerous
stranger, and a love that
might be more beast
than man.



2024
OPEN CONTACT CHALLENGE
PAPERBACK
WINNER

Linda M. Sauve
Little Red

Horror

Haunted Memories

By: Dawn DeBraal



Dawn DeBraal

Dawn DeBraal lives in rural Wisconsin with her husband, a stray cat and a rescued dog. She has published over 600 short stories, drabbles, and poems in online ezines and anthologies. She tends to lean toward the horror genre because it makes her life seem so much better! Falling Star Magazine nominated Dawn for the 2019 Pushcart Award; she was Runner-up in the 2022 Horror Story Competition, two-time Author of the Month, nominated 2020, 2022, 2023 Author of the Year in Spillwords, Member of the Month in Issues 103 and 115 in The World of Myth Magazine.

Birdie Hefferman slipped the razor blade into the apple. Tonight's party at the old schoolhouse was to be a fun gathering, but she had other plans. She'd set up the bobbing for apples game, using an old, galvanized tub filled to the brim with water, then pouring apples into it. Only one apple had a razor blade in it, so the odds were in the child's favor.

The delicious red fruit bobbed up and down in the water. Tonight, bobbing for apples would be like playing Russian Roulette. Which child would get the apple with the razor blade? She moved on to the lemonade in the punch bowl and doused it with a good portion of rat poison. Birdie asked the parents for help in putting the annual Halloween party together. Every year since she started this "safe party," the children's parents were content to let her do all the work, including buying all the supplies. She was burned out and no longer wanted responsibility for the children.

When that child went missing on Halloween years ago, she stepped up the following year to transform the old schoolhouse into a haunted house, adding games and prizes to enhance the experience. Everyone loved it. But it had been ten years with Birdie putting on the party alone. During the year, she had several bake sales to raise money for the Halloween parties. She raffled off quilts and earned

enough to rent the school, put up decorations, games, and food. It was a major undertaking, and the ungrateful parents came every year. Sometimes they'd give her five dollars for their child to attend. Cheap babysitting for keeping their child safe year after year. No one ever knew what happened to the Clemmons boy who disappeared trick-or-treating without a trace. It was Birdie Hefferman who stepped up to save the children of Wilmer's Grove. She set out the Ex-Lax chocolate spiders on fake webs, wondering which child would get the runs first. That made her chuckle, especially if it was a complicated costume. When had she gotten to this point? Ten years of being taken advantage of had made her bitter.

"Bitter Birdie." She chuckled, wondering how long Timmy Clemmons, who had lived in her cellar all these years, would remain. He was getting too old to keep down there. He'd grown taller and stronger than her seventy years could handle. It's funny how he used to be afraid of her; now she was scared of him. She didn't know how to get out of the predicament she'd put herself into when she invited the boy in. He was all alone that night, foolish parents. If she let him go, he would tell people about her. The town would be shocked that they left their children with this woman, unattended, for five measly dollars, and she turned out to be a kidnapper. Jail was inevitable.

Birdie had grown to love Timmy. He was the child she never had. But she sensed something was happening in her body. The old ticker would race, making her feel breathless and out of control. She had to find a way for the town to rescue Timmy before he starved to death after she died. That was the goal. To die before they arrested her, but to save Timmy in the process. At this late stage, even if she were caught, the odds were that she wouldn't live to see a trial. The skipping of her heart reassured her that Birdie's days were numbered. Timmy had been well provided for, but now that he was no longer a cute child, she had to get rid of him. He ate too much, always asking for more of her hot milk sponge cake, more meat, more potatoes. He was literally eating her out of house and home. The cashier at Benny's Mart would look at her strangely when she bought so many groceries—probably thinking, how could this sprite of a woman eat all that food? It was a matter of time before the inevitable, either her or Timmy would die. She'd grown fond of the boy, reading to him each night through the slot in the door. He couldn't read very well because he'd been in that room since he was five. At first, he cried a lot, but eventually he accepted his life, especially when she got him a television set. That kept him entertained all day long. Birdie worried about what he was watching, but then Timmy couldn't be in the outside world, so he wouldn't use any of the bad things he saw. The chandelier made of daggers was real. She put it on a pulley system and hoisted it up to the ceiling. It was designed to fall and pin someone to the ground. She loosely tied the rope to the banister, knowing some clumsy

kid would trip on the rope and bring it down. The decoration was all part of the haunted house scenario. They would find her crazy, arrest her, and she'd have her heart attack in peace. They'd go out to her house, search it, and find little Timmy, who wasn't so little anymore. He would be reunited with his family, and all would be made right in the world. She had it all planned.

What she foolishly started ten years ago would end tonight with some kid going to the emergency room. It would be a party the sleepy town would never forget.

Birdie lit a large orange candle on the dining table in the middle of the room. The hot dogs were sitting in a crockpot on the counter with all the fixings. She even fed the children.

The first guests arrived. Birdie put on her witch's hat and put the gnarly teeth in her mouth, cackling when she opened the door.

"Come in." The spiders hung from the ceiling along with some rubber bats. The younger kids were too afraid and made their parents go first, but the older ones loved the atmosphere. She started the recording in the background of clanking chains and screaming people.

"Birdie, you've outdone yourself." Hank Vetter guided his fairy princess daughter through the haunted house. "It's okay, Honey, it's safe, it's all pretend." When they reached the gymnasium, he gave her a pumpkin bag to go around and gather candies in the dishes. Only then did the tension in her little shoulders relax. More children came, and soon the entire neighborhood arrived. It was Andy Hayes who ran for the toilet first; he'd made a pig out of himself eating the fake chocolate spiders, even though Birdie warned him that too

much chocolate would give him a bellyache. The boy ignored her. The older woman's hand covered her mouth, and she chuckled when she saw Andy fly through the open area, headed for the bathrooms. He wouldn't be out for the rest of the night. What Andy did to himself saved him from some of the worst scenarios Birdie had in store for the children that night.

"Hot dogs, anyone?" The children rushed to her with their buns open, and she dished the hot dogs into them, knowing one of the hot dogs had straight pins stuck into them. Which child would be the lucky one? Birdie wondered.

She started the balloon relay race. Each child had to put a balloon between their knees and run across the gymnasium, tag their partner, who would run the balloon back between their knees. Birdie blew the whistle, and the race started. Caught up in excitement, Birdie didn't realize she was under the dagger chandelier. Hank Vetter's daughter, the fairy princess, ran after her friend on the balcony, bumping into the rope that held the dagger chandelier in the air. Down came the heavy light fixture, pinning Birdie to the ground. This unfortunate accident did not follow the plan.

"Birdie!" People gathered around her, stunned that a knife-laden chandelier was real.

"Call an ambulance," another person shouted.

Blood, it was hers, and she could feel herself fading. "Timmy Clemmons is in my cellar," she whispered.

"What? Birdie, I don't understand what you are saying." Hank Vetter moved closer to the woman, trying to hear her confession, whose hands clutched his arms and pulled him closer to

understand what she was trying to say. Just then, the emergency technician was at her side, pushing Hank away. Together, they lifted the heavy chandelier off Birdie and took her away in the ambulance.

"Let's shut her down." Hank Vetter said, escorting people and crying children out of the building. It was horrible what the children witnessed. What Hank didn't know was that the unfortunate accident that befell Birdie actually saved the children. No one drank rat-poisoned lemonade, bobbed for the razor-blade apple, or got the lucky hot dog filled with stick pins. Only Andy Hayes and Birdie experienced a bit of what the woman tried to destroy.

Later that night, firetrucks rushed by Hank's house, headed for the old schoolhouse that was on fire, according to his scanner. Hank thought about the candle on the papered tablecloth and the crockpot of hot dogs still plugged into old wiring. He should have thought about that before locking the doors.

An hour or so later, Hank answered the phone.

"She didn't make it?" Hank thanked his neighbor for the call, some distant relative, twice removed, to Birdie. He wished he'd understood the dying woman's last words. Birdie made what she was saying seem so important. He played what she could have said over in his head.

Combinations of things the woman could have been telling him. Not knowing would haunt Hank most nights. Especially when months later, the family finally got around to clearing Birdie's house, finding the remains of Timmy Clemmons in front of the television set in her cellar.

Poems

Basophobia

By: Timothy Law



Timothy Law

Timothy Law is a writer of fantasy, horror, detective and general fiction from a little town in Southern Australia called Murray Bridge. A happily married father of three children, family is very important to him. Currently working at the Murray Bridge Library in the role of Library Manager he has dreamed since his early high school years of becoming a full-time author. Working for a library, surrounded by so many wonderful authors it is difficult not to be inspired to write. Many of his short stories and general musings can be found on his blog <http://somecallmetimmy.blogspot.com.au/> or on [Parenting Express website](#).

Birds are born with wings to fly
And so, I ask the question why?
Such a flaw we all should see
Omitting something like feathers from humanity
Perhaps we were never supposed to seek
Heavenly heights, a race so weak
Only we did, we learnt to build our own wings
By tinkering with feathers, fabric and other things
Imagining what it is like to fly
And now we know what it is to fall and die

Poems

Bell Book and Candle

By: Kate MacDonald-Dunbar



For weeks now, I've heard scratching within the walls
evil whispers, taunting, foretelling what will befall me.

Looking down the hallway, there's the doorway to freedom
I also see the obstacles ahead, eager to cut and maim me.

Finally, tonight, my spirit rises to the challenge, to fight.
I will fear nothing; give my Bell, Book, and Candle to me.

My Bell rings pure, words curse the dead, candlelight burns,
neither daggers, nor swords, wielded by the dead, can harm me.

Kate MacDonald-Dunbar

Kate MacDonald-Dunbar is a retired septuagenarian who started to write just over sixteen months ago. She has many hobbies, but writing helps to fill an insomniac's dark quiet hours. She has had seventeen poems and six short stories published, online and in print: Chris Fielden's "Nonsensically Challenged," for charity. High Shelf Press volume XXIII. WinglessDreamer. Spillwords Press. 805 Lit and Art. Funny Pearls. Little Old Lady Comedy. Dillydoun Review. The World of Myth Magazine.

Poems

Late at night

By: Max Bindi



Max Bindi

Max Bindi is an Italian Author/Translator/Poet. His work has been featured in Poetry Anthologies by publishers such as The SFPA, HellBound books, The Ravens Quoth Press etc. as well as in a variety of international Literary Magazines both online and in print, including: Aphelion, The Horror Zine, The Sirens Call eZine, Lovecraftiana (Rogue Planet Press), Raven Cage Zine, Better Than Starbucks, The Stygian Lepus and elsewhere. He was nominated for the Dwarf Stars Award in 2023.

Late at night
 I lay awake
 in a darkened room
 while black phantoms
 peer into my gloom
 but do you see
 what I see
 when all ghouls
 shut their eyes
 and the darkness
 comes eerily alive?
 Late at night
 lonesome wanderers
 cross thin shadow lines
 while unreal cities
 burn in the moonlight
 but do you feel
 what I feel
 when all spooks run wild
 and the dead stars
 shine ominously bright?
 Late at night
 spectral lovers stroll
 down by the riverside
 while their reflections
 swim against the tide
 but do you dream
 what they dream
 when love breaks all ties
 and all faint hearts roll
 like hollow dice?
 Late at night
 We climb over
 abysmal heights
 reaching out
 for a frightening insight
 but do you bleed
 like I bleed
 when the winds of sorrow

Poems

Only Then

By: *Gabriella Balcom*



Gabriella Balcom

Gabriella Balcom, who is from Texas, writes fantasy, horror/thriller, romance, sci-fi, and more. She likes traveling, music, photography, great stories, history and movies. Gabriella says she loves forests, mountains, and back roads. She has a weakness for lasagna, garlic bread, tacos, cheese and chocolate. Check out her author page:

<https://facebook.com/GabriellaBalcom.lonestarauthor>

Mist and deep shadows come and go
 But what they're up to, I do not know.
 First they're here; then they're gone,
 Like swindlers pulling a sneaky con.
 Satyrs, goblins, and all their scary kin
 Prowl round and about, plotting to sin.
 Ghosts surround as many as they can,
 And witches swoop down here, there,
 Kidnapping scared people everywhere.
 Who knows what they actually plan
 To do with each woman, child, and man.
 Maybe they intend to stuff and fatten
 Up their victims, or they might batten
 Down their hidey-holes, devouring their
 Unhappy prey raw, all but bones and hair.
 Zombies lumber by, seeking fresh meat,
 Hoping to gnaw on hands, faces, eyes, feet.
 Black cats prance along on velvet paws,
 Crunching who-knows-what in their jaws.
 Monsters ooze from the ground, so many
 Types. Solid, gaseous, small, hulking. Any
 Variety you could think of is no doubt here,
 So lock your doors and protect those dear
 To you. You mustn't show your face or even
 Peek outside. Just stay there in your safe den
 Until the new day comes and dawns bright.
 Only when All Saints' Eve is past, its might
 And extra power once more depleted and past,
 Can you stop worrying and your life still last.
 Only then can you relax and lower your guard.
 But until that point, be very careful and try hard
 To avoid all the nasties swarming through the
 Neighborhood. On the morrow, safety will be
 Yours once more. Heed my words and you'll see,
 But ignore them at your peril; you'll end up dead,
 Savaged or eaten, and the spooks happy, well-fed.

The end.

Poems

Separated But Unequaled

By: Ken Gosse



Ken Gosse

Ken Gosse usually writes rhymed, humorous verse in traditional meters. First published in *First Literary Review—East* in November 2016, his poetry is also in *Pure Slush*, *Home Planet News Online*, *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *Spillwords*, and others. Raised in the Chicago, Illinois, suburbs, now retired, he and his wife have lived in Mesa, AZ, over twenty years with rescue cats and dogs underfoot.

While in my chambre séparée,
where I would while the hours away,
she always knew what I went through
when she would drop the other shoe,
and he would, too.

Familiar sounds confirmed she's glad.
She always knew they made me sad
because the way that we would woo
when we were one instead of two
were theirs to do.

In turn, each paramour was through
(as if there were no more to do)—
not good or bad, not whore or cad,
a happy lass, her favorite fad
an unclad lad.

Another day's or night's ado,
perhaps no thrill, perhaps *beaucoup*,
and yet I'll stay another day,
in hopes she might return my way—
and never stray.

Art Gallery

*Alucard from Carpathia
Comic Book Graphic Novel*

By: John Kotsis



John Kotsis

John Kotsis is a comic book artist/creator based in New York City is also the current founder of ANTHI ENTERTAINMENT a independent comic book publishing unit as well as the founder of ENEMI ENTERTAINMENT an entertainment entity consisting of comic books, film & music. Check it out at:

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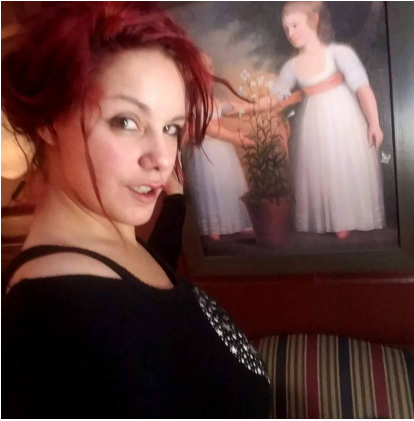
Instagram [@psychorawart](#)



Art Gallery

Skeleton

By: Connie Minutolo



Connie Minutolo

Constance "Connie" Minutolo has drawn for as long as she could hold a pencil. A fan of comic books and an avid player of video games finding inspiration from those mediums (and her current mood) in her own artwork. But, believes that she has the ability to draw almost anything and currently working her hardest to become a professional freelance artist, so she could travel the world and share her love of art with others.



Art Gallery

Falling For You

By: Timothy Law



Timothy Law

Timothy Law is a writer of fantasy, horror, detective and general fiction from a little town in Southern Australia called Murray Bridge. A happily married father of three children, family is very important to him. Currently working at the Murray Bridge Library in the role of Library Manager he has dreamed since his early high school years of becoming a full-time author. Working for a library, surrounded by so many wonderful authors it is difficult not to be inspired to write. Many of his short stories and general musings can be found on his blog <http://somecallmetimmy.blogspot.com.au/> or on [Parenting Express website](#).



Art Gallery

Pukimus Prime

By: Ed Bickford



Ed Bickford

Ed is an illustrator that lives in Kansas City, Missouri with his wife, three kids, and two dogs. He has been drawing since he can remember. He has a degree in illustration and has self published comics and attends comic book conventions around the US. His dream is to one day make an obscene amount of money to drink coffee and draw monsters all day.



Movie Reviews

Review of *Halloween Ends*

By: *Moviegoer Grim*



Moviegoer Grim

Moviegoer Grim started reviewing films in his twenties, and now, in his forties he continues his criticism while he wonders where has time gone. He mains a fan of a quality made film and a television show (or two), and a meanie head for those crappy ones that litter the world!



Just when I thought my retirement was actually gonna stick, I got the request to do a Halloween movie review. It just so happens that I caught a new movie I would enjoy rehashing. While I have spent this month watching a bunch of good scary movies, the one flick that comes to mind is the most recent screening I attended: *Halloween Ends*. Now, I admit that this round of trilogies was not my absolute favorite incarnation of the franchise. While I feel that Halloween from 2018 was a reasonable attempt at a reboot as a sequel to the 1977 blockbuster with the same name, while personally, I was not overly a fan of the idea that Laurie Strode was not Michael Myers' sister—

in my humble opinion, I feel that it takes away from the motivation as to why he has tried to kill her, versus that after forty years she was the only one that survived the masked killer. Of course, that in itself is an incorrect notion, as others lived as well, but I think the sister angle made more sense.

Halloween Kills had so much potential but, alas, fell in the generalization of the typical trope for a sequel. As a result, it was basically a second act when it bridges the first and the third act together. I think that the thing that gripes my ass most is that the character development and plot building were almost all but forgotten with the third movie.

But then we get to *Halloween Ends*! Holy dear baby Jesus in a half-shell, what a fantastic movie! While people crap on this film, for whatever reason, it makes them feel important, you know, the "it's too violent," or "It's too bloody," "It doesn't have enough woke items shoved in you face."

It is a (insert all the swear words you can think of) horror and slasher flick! Yes, it is gonna have some good old fashion slicing and dicing of the general public, aka the resident of Haddonfield. This movie felt like it attempted to make all other timelines make sense in a cohesive universe; there are nods to almost every Halloween film made in this rendition. I think one of the layers of the plot that I sincerely enjoyed was the introduction of Cory which adds

depth and leaves the audience wondering whether it was a setup for Halloween: The Next Generation, as this film had more to do with him and Laurie's granddaughter Allison than Strode and Michael this time around. Another thing I loved about this flick was how both Laurie and Michael were aged in character, not just physically. The fact that Laurie attempted to move on from what had happened with her daughter's passing and Myers himself to be as normal as possible actually affected Michael on an emotional level to the point where he just hung out in a sewage drain. It was the fear that Laurie brought to the party which motivated Michael for all those years, it was an ultimate power trip, and once she took that from him, he had nothing—until he was brought his first victim. Then, as Michael stabbed the dude and saw the fear in his dying eyes, we, as moviegoers (pun intended), watched the masked killer come back to life. In fact, it was not until he came face to face with Laurie that he did not seem to be himself (Come on, you know, at some point at the end of the movie, they were gonna have a final showdown; it's in the bloody damn title).

This movie had so many incredible layers added to its storytelling as it felt that it really explored the man versus man element and not only in a homicidal way, as this film explores the expanding relationship of Laurie and Officer Frank Hawkins, her new journey in continuing to heal and becoming a novelist. The ties that Allison and Cory have and what path it will send them down, as the acts of his past haunt Cory until he can accept them.

There is so much happening that someone would need to have a

second or even a third view to perhaps catch most of the important things going on all the way into the ending. As you probably can tell, I am doing my best to create a non-spoiler movie review, but I am going to put it on front street, **SPOILERS HEAD!** So stop reading here and look for the part that reads *end of spoilers*.

As we come to an end, Laurie finally comes face to face with Michael, which is a fast-paced action sequence through her house that had a great sense of the first time they encountered each other in 1977, but instead of the climax finalizing upstairs, it would conclude in the kitchen as Laurie finally bests Myers—now, I will shift her and address some criticism I read online. On that ruffled my feathers a bit as many whined that Strode would never get the best of Michael. However, she had many times in other timelines before, but whatever, I digress.

In the original 1977, Halloween, which was forty-five years ago! Laurie was seventeen or eighteen, and we assumed that Michael was in his early twenties, again, with that same premise in mind that would make him in his mid-sixties and her early sixties. They are older people!

Michael has been shot, stabbed, burned alive, and lived in a sewer for an unknown time; homeboy was on his last leg anyway! That is why Laurie went off and, according to the 2018 movie, trained every day for forty years. Despite finding peace that year, when she faced him for the final time, all that training kicked in, and she got the upper hand.

After she bleeds Michael like a pig before going to a bacon factory, his story does not end there as the residents wanted to make sure that he was dead-dead and was taken to a

grinder that there was no chance in hell he was coming back from. What an ending! I know some did not like it, but I felt it was the only perfect way to stop and end the story of Michael Myers... Although, they never said what exactly happened to the iconic mask. Wink. Wink.

END OF SPOILERS, so you can pick back reading here! I felt that this movie was a fantastic conclusion to the Halloween franchise while at the same time opening the door for brand-new and original stories to be made. While I admit, at times, the pacing was a bit off, and a few things happened that took me out of the movie, it was a solid story and film.

So for *HALLOWEEN ENDS*, I give it four golden stars and was happy that it did not suck as much as the whiners online said it did. Oh! And, if you felt this movie was too gory and over the top for you, then for the love of Gawd, DO NOT watch Rob Zombie's remakes; it could possibly send you to the emergency room!

Alright, that is it for me. I welcome your thoughts and comments below, don't send me hate mail because I won't read it, but just put it here on this pretty little page. Okay, kids, we will see how long it is until they need me again.

Until Then...

I remain,

Moviegoer Grim

COMMENTARY FROM THE FOUNDER

Why Halloween?

By: David K. Montoya



David K. Montoya

For a good part of two decades David K. Montoya was an active writer, artist and business entrepreneur in the micro-publication world. In 2013, turned his pen in for a microphone and became a podcaster for the following five years—and even did a small stint in independent Hollywood. But, now, he's come home and is ready to begin weaving new tales for this magazine.

Welcome to our *special*

Halloween, gang! I know that everyone is expecting that I will be talking about the elephant in the room, but that can wait for November's issue. I slightly recall talking with Steph about making a special edition for the magazine for Halloween. That got me thinking about why I was so hell-bent on putting out an issue for that specific event. The keyword in that previous sentence was *event*.

For some, it is Samhain, the festival that marks the end of summer. Fun fact: my mentor, the late, great Terry D. Scheerer, who was Pagan, told me that Samhain translates into English as *Summer's End*. While I know many who celebrate the Festival of the Summer's End, I do not personally. Many might think I also take part in *Día De Los Muertos* because of my Hispanic heritage. Again, I know many people who have a deep religious connection and believe that it is either the day to honor or even communicate with their dead family members. Again, this is not something I take part

in, but I respect and hold those people dear to my heart, because who doesn't miss their departed family members?

For me, Halloween is an event, much like Thanksgiving is an event, but it is recognized as a holiday here in the States. While I openly acknowledge that Halloween is an offspring of the original *Samhain* and then changed into All Hallows Eve by the Church, it was what came next that my family participates in. I remember my great-grandfather telling me the story of how kids used to have very little to do in the 1920s and 30s as the world evolved around them, and many would find themselves in trouble just for doing illegal stuff out of boredom. It was around the 1950s that the concept of Halloween for kids was designed, with costumes and going door to door seeking treats to keep them out of trouble.

Over the last seventy years, it has turned into a mainstream event that the U.S. and Canada enjoy annually. So, here's why I have a special place in my heart for Halloween. The first thing you need to know is that my mom is a *very* religious person. Like she was raised as a child, she was not allowed to be a part of Halloween,

and that transferred into my childhood. Now, there were a couple of times that I was allowed to dress up and go with my cousin, but when I was eight, I was no longer allowed. I remember that particular time. She did not have the heart to tell me that she felt it was morphing into something that she could no longer allow me to participate in.

I recall that since I did not have a costume that year, I made myself a makeshift one from odds and ends around the house and used a pillowcase for the candy. I waited for her to show up, and I waited. It was late when my mom pulled up to my great-grandma's house. She said it was now too late to go trick-or-treating and that I could spend the weekend with her because she got movies. It was one of those things that stayed with me.

When I got to her house, I was handed a bunch of videotapes (VHS) to watch. As I looked through them, I realized they were all Christmas movies. That lasted until my sister *Rebecca* wanted to go trick-or-treating when she was five. I would have been sixteen, and I told my mom that I would take her out and make sure she was safe. She reluctantly agreed, bought her a costume, and allowed me to go with her. That was the final time I would dress up and go out as a child, although I was there to protect my sister and really wasn't interested in candy.

So, as an adult with children, when my kids want to go out for Halloween, I happily agree. Why? Because I know it is nothing I should be concerned with. Nothing nefarious is happening. It's about kids wanting to interact with other kids on a day when they get to dress up, become someone other than themselves, and get a butt-load

of candy to boot!

So, you see, that is why Halloween is so special to me. It's not about traditions or religious beliefs. It's about friends and family being allowed to come together, dress up, and become something they are not. It's about **FUN!** The creepy or scary tales that come along with the event translate over into *The World of Myth*, because I want to put something together that's fun! Even if you are not allowed to be a part of it, you can come here and, in these pages, enjoy the fun of Halloween!

I hope everyone had a great Halloween!

I will see you all soon!

Until next time!

David K. Montoya



Founder of The World of Myth Magazine And Other Stuff Too

S O L O L E V E L I N G

DUBBY

S-RANK ENERGY



BE BETTER