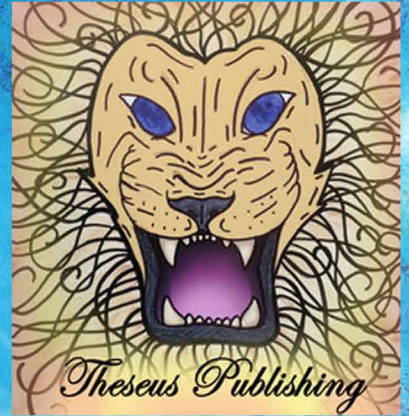


# *Fifth Edition* *March/April 2013*

Welcome to *Theseus  
Publishing Online Magazine!*  
Home to a variety of Sci-Fi and  
Fantasy Short Stories.



**Editors:**  
Becky Hayes  
and  
Tasha Williams

**What's Unique in this Edition?**  
For this issue we let the reader  
choose which Flash Fiction  
theme they wrote about:

**Contributing Writers:**  
Various  
(See Inside)

*Into the Dark* or *LightHeart*

*A Phantom of the Opera  
review is also included!*



*Hope all our readers had a hoppingly good Easter!*





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This Issue's *Flash Fiction* is split into a choice of two themes.

**INTO THE  
DARK**

**VS**

*Light  
Heart*

Which theme did *you* choose?

## 50 Word Stories

### Red by Emily Wood

Crimson, from the blood that blinded my vision, I stepped forward, the joyous clear mist coating my feet as if I were entering heaven. In a way I was revitalising myself, my body, soul and mind. I lay as if to sleep and was eclipsed in light - his light.

### Belief by Becky Hayes

The ancient civilisation that once filled that castle was long gone. Only the wood sprites and tree goblins took to living there now, the light-hearted folk who stopped that castle from crumbling down around them.

They tended the weeds and steadied the stone, and in return it sheltered their magic.



### A Brutal Beauty by Cassandra Willis

For a vampire life is like air. Though vampires do not breathe so maybe that is a bad example. Needless to say vampires think little of life and little of those who inhabit it. To them we are all vermin, loitering on their aristocratic world. And they will kill us all.



# INTO THE DARK

*Into the Dark* could have been interpreted in a variety of different ways by our submitting writers; Sub-genres could have included a horror story, a psychological thriller, a story set in war-time, anything!

In our *Into the Dark* section we have:

- *A Smile for Saint Peter* by Irving A. Greenfield
- *Phantom of the Opera* Review
- *The Book of Lost Things* Book Review

Enjoy



## A SMILE FOR SAINT PETER by Irving A. Greenfield

At well over a hundred, Edith was the family matriarch. How much over was a much discussed point by the members of the family waiting for her to die, something she was reluctant to do. But not because she was afraid of going to hell, she lived most of her life with the absolute certainty she would go to heaven with the other good people who preceded her. More than a few times, she said that she hadn't any expectations of meeting either of her two ex-husbands there. Her first, Frank Beach, the handsomer of the two, enjoyed several glasses of Irish whiskey as he was wont to do on payday, and died in the sweet oblivion of intoxication never aware, so she was told by Father Troost, that he was trampled to death by a runaway horse. Her second husband, Sal - - Salvatore - - Galiano died peacefully in his bed two days after his eightieth birthday. She suspected from too much celebrating.

With Frank she had three sons and with Sal, two daughters, Marie and Paulette and a son, Vincent. Frank's three boys, fought in World War Two. Frank Jr. and Thomas were in the navy and Henry was a Marine. Vincent was in something called Special Forces, during the war in Vietnam. None of the boys ever spoke about what they did or where they were. It was as if that part of their lives belonged to other men.

All of her children with their children, her nieces and nephews and some of those with their children, drifted in and out of her hospital room. She knew the doctors told by the doctor that her death was only hours away, perhaps only minutes? But was several days ago. She knew that from the way the sliver of sunlight that found its way into the room from the upper part of the drawn blinds in the morning and from the comings and goings of the people who attended her. She also knew from the gentleness of their touch or lack of it, whether it was the day or night shift, and from the sounds, those during the day were always louder than those at night.

#

If she had any energy, she'd call all of her daughters and all of her sons



fools and tell them what she needed “to give up the ghost.” She knew she was being pesky by hanging around, taking so much of their time for own.

But what’s a woman to do? This would be her last exit and even more important her final entrance. She had to look her best. She left explicit directions about how she should be dressed for the wake. Her best dress, her nails done and her long, gray hair done up in a bun. All that was to show, to remind those who came to pay their last respects to her, that once she was a beautiful woman who turned men’s heads.

But - - Why was there almost always that little word that had the power to change things, create misgivings where none should be, and make all sorts of difficulties. She never doubted the word was the Devil’s work, his way of tormenting the faithful while laughing at God. And in her case she was sure of it, otherwise she’d surrender herself to the life that awaited her when she left this one.

She was unable speak or move her hands to tell her daughter or sons what she wanted, though one of them should have known just be looking at her, dolts, the whole lot of them. There they were tiptoeing in and out of the room and not one of them saw what was missing.

#

Frank stood at her bedside. She knew it was him from the scent of his cologne, sharp with a tinge of something smokey. Very masculine. Soon he’d become the family patriarch.

He moved his hand gently over the top of her head.

She knew what he was thinking, stubborn to the end. She wanted to smile, she wanted to tell him how much she loved him, how much she loved all of her children. But he was her first. He was her love child before the love went sour. Before the man she married lost himself in a whiskey-fog.

She felt his breath on her forehead, felt the softness of his lips, and heard him whisper, macushla.

An instant later he drew away laughing, and she knew he knew what she wanted, what she needed. her false teeth.





# A Phantom of the Opera


## Review

By Becky Hayes

Recently I went to go and see *Phantom of the Opera* at the Liverpool Empire Theatre. It seems like the perfect play to review when exploring the ideas of light and darkness within our issue.

I should start by saying that I have also been to watch *Phantom* once before, whilst in London, so it was actually quite interesting for me to compare the two performances. Both were of course amazing, but they did have some differences, most likely due to the production in Liverpool being set on a smaller stage than the production in the West End. I found that the main difference was Liverpool's use of a turning stage setting. This allowed several different scene changes without much delay between acts. Whereas, as I recall, the London production did not use this technique and they instead set up each scene when it was required. The most noticeable change for me was the scene in which they sing 'The Phantom of the Opera'. In the West End version the journey down to beneath the opera house was far grander and included a mechanical stage, however the Liverpool version had a turning stage that opened out into the underground lair.

Focusing on the actual storyline *Phantom of the Opera* is a very well known story, brought to the stage by Andrew Lloyd Webber. But did any of you know that it was in fact based on the book 'Phantom of the Opera' by French writer Gaston Leroux. If you're a fan of the *Phantom of the Opera* stage production then I would highly suggest giving the original story a read, although it is quite different in parts!





The main story is about a young woman called Christine. She is a dancer in an opera crew. After Carlotta, the lead opera singer refuses to carry on performing at the theatre Christine is suggested to fill the position and her singing talents come to light. Many of the other characters question how she has learnt to sing so well and who her mysterious tutor is, who she refers to only as The Angel of Music. Over the course of the play we realise that Christine's Angel of Music is in fact the Phantom; a disfigured genius who lives in the catacombs beneath the theatre. From this point of realisation the play becomes increasingly darker with two murders and a dramatic chandelier catastrophe.

As I referred to earlier I chose to write about Phantom as I do think it is a great example when it comes to light versus darkness. The song 'All I ask of you' is a clear example of this. In the song Christine sings to Raoul about wanting to be free of the night and walk in the sunlight. I felt that throughout the play Christine is supposed to represent innocence. This makes it easy to argue that the Phantom represents darkness and possibly temptation and Raoul represents the light and the safety Christine longs for. Although this sounds plausible I do not completely agree with Raoul's role in the play, as it is also made obvious that he represents traditional values, such as being the strong and dominating male who wishes to make Christine his wife and essentially 'own' her. For this reason I am completely 'Team Phantom' all the way. Who wouldn't want a guy who writes you music and idolises you? It's just the slight murderous obsession that could be a bit of a problem...

Overall I would highly suggest for everyone to go and watch Phantom of the Opera. It is a classic storyline full of talented singers and amazing songs that will leave you in awe and wonder.





## *The Book of Lost Things* Review

By Tasha Williams

*The Book of Lost Things* is a book written by John Connolly. I picked up this book at a used book store the other month and finally got around to reading it. As some book addicts may know, cheap book stores and car boot sales are our hero in, and before we know it we've stockpiled books to the extent where we run out of shelves. This is what happened with *The Book of Lost Things*, so for many months it sat untouched.

But I'm pretty glad that I read it.

*The Book of Lost Things* is set around the time of World War One, and begins as the protagonist - a 12 year old boy named David loses his mother to cancer. He sits back and loses himself in his books as his father remarries and his stepmother gives birth to his half brother - Georgie. As David rebels against his new family and loses himself further and further in his books, they begin to speak to him and one night, he passes through a rather strange ditch in the garden into the world of fiction, where he is in immediate danger from the bedtime monsters that is every child's nightmare.

I found this book to be extremely creepy, as at some points it merely seems like the reader is stepping through a fairytale, but then the dark side of it comes to light and you realise that this book is definitely not for the light hearted, least of all children. A character that we see frequently comes in the terrifying form of



'The Crooked Man', whose very entrance on paper sent shivers down my spine.

Though interesting, in places I found the writer to wander away from the point a bit, which may have been necessary for the plot, but for me it disengaged me from the text and the story of David. Though I found it to be an exciting and enthralling read, there were still some moments where I just stopped due to being slightly thrown off by the writers techniques.

As a result of all this,

I give *The Book of Lost Things*: 6/10





# *Light Heart*

*Light Heart* could have been interpreted anyway by our submitting writers. Perhaps a simple light-hearted story? Or maybe one that incorporates the subgenres of romance or comedy?

In our *Light Heart* section we have:

- *McGuiness' Heart* by Rob Stoakes

☆ - *Jack the Giant Slayer* Film Review

- *Dark Eden* Book Review

- *Iron Man 3* Film Review

☆ Enjoy ☆



## *McGuinness' Heart* by Rob Stoakes

The cold, grey obelisk of a skyscraper drove out of the city like a fist defiantly raised to the heavens. Inside this cold, grey obelisk, at the very top, was a cold, grey table in a cold, grey room. The table looked like an oval if it had been squashed, very thin and very long. Inside this cold, grey room, sitting at the cold, grey table were a large collection of people in cold, grey suits, their eyes all black beads focused onto a singular point, their gaze dancing across the man who stood before them. At one end of the cold, grey table sat the man in the coldest, greyest suit of all, and his eyes were the blackest and the beadiest. Even his hair was cold and grey, and you could fit a deck of cards into his wrinkles they were so heavy and numerous. He frowned a miserly frown.

“Mister McGuinness. What is this... thing that you are presenting?” The man at the head of the table said. He spat on every syllable and drew each one out for at least a second. No one complained, though secretly his secretary, a young girl who was stuck in an admin job for work experience, did find it one of his more disgusting qualities, along with him constantly flirting with her despite her being only fifteen.

“Well, gentlemen. Ladies. I present the Light Heart.” Came the reply from McGuinness, who did not look cold or grey. He was the second youngest in the room, besides the obviously disgusted secretary. Slick black hair in a frankly awful comb-over, gangly and awkward, with a chin that was slightly to the side of where it probably should’ve been. However, the most eye-catching thing about him was none of these, but the fact that there was a gaping hole in his chest, besides a long, bloody cord that led some three feet above him. There, bobbing and hovering like a red balloon, was a beating heart. His beating heart. Drops of blood splattered across the cold, grey table. One of the women at the table made a humming sound out of curiosity.



“So who is the target demographic?” She asked. McGuinness grinned to her in a very toady way.

“I’m glad you asked.” He said, also in a very toady way. “For you see, the Light Heart is made for the curious, the artistic, and the adventurous. Rebels, teenagers, non-conformists alike will all be begging for one!” McGuinness placed a suitcase on the table and opened it, before producing a little sombrero from it and placing it atop the beating heart. “It’s a whole new way to express yourself. All those old folks, walking around with their hearts awkwardly slammed into their ribcages like miserable potatoes, that’s the old way of doing things! However, now, with the Light Heart, you can throw off the shackles of society, and show those guys just how much we care for their boring old ‘traditions’. Plus, it’s a platform for expressing yourself. I can put hats on my heart.” With his eyes filled with wonder at this point, he began producing even more from his suitcase. “I can hang baubles from my veins, I can use it to hang up my coat, and when you buy one it gets its own Twitter account where it will tweet a pre-programmed message every time it bumps into the ceiling.”

All the men and women at the table looked to the man at the opposite end to McGuinness. His brow furrowed slightly, so they all turned and furrowed their brows too, thinking it was the right thing to do. “How much does it cost to produce?” Came a small, weedy voice. McGuinness smiled back, though now he was a lot more nervous.

“Ah, well, it does cost a bit to make.” He explained, visibly sweating from his brow. “We first cut the heart out, then we shave it until it weighs half of what it normal would and fill it with helium. Most of the costs are for anaesthetic, I’m sure we could cover it by making that an exclusive add-on.”



Everyone looked to the man at the head of the table. He didn't react for a while. Then, he straightened his cold, grey tie, took a sly look at his secretary's chest, before glaring straight at McGuinness.

"Does it have wi-fi capability?" He asked.

"Yes."

He slammed his fist down enthusiastically.

"I WANT THESE IN SHOPS BY FRIDAY!"





# Jack the Giant Slayer - Film Review

By Tasha Williams

The other week I went to see *Jack the Giant Slayer* with my family. It stars Nicholas Hoult (*Skins*, *Warm Bodies*) as Jack, and is a new rendition of the classic fairytale: Jack and the Beanstalk.

The film starts through the perspectives of Jack and Kingdom of Cloister's Princess Isabelle (Eleanor Tomlinson) as children being told the same story about a king who many centuries ago slayed giants and banished them to the sky forever. They both seem intrigued by them and are both told to follow their own adventures when they are older.

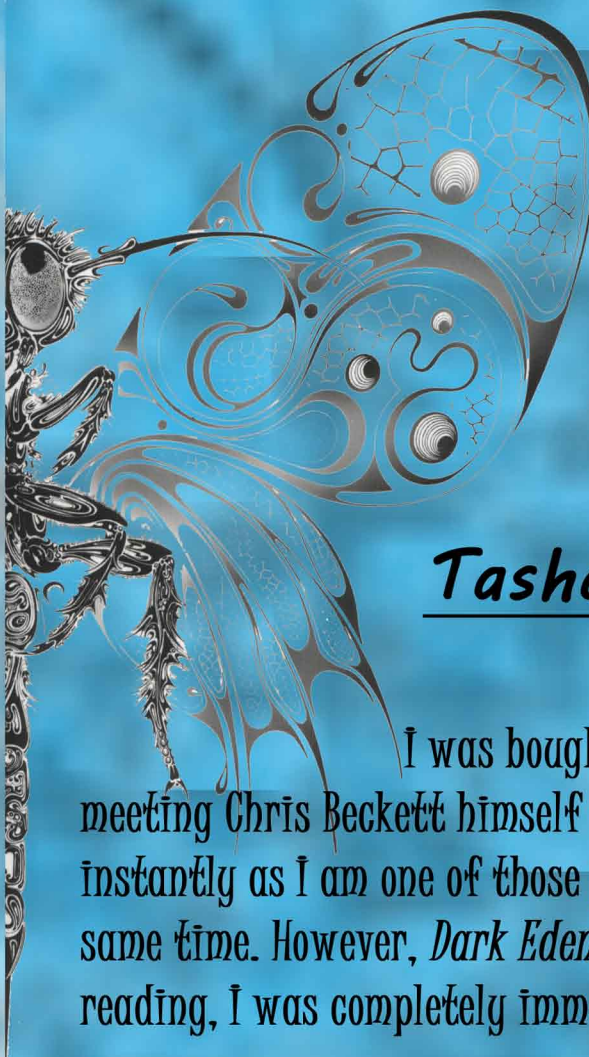
It then moves to ten years in the future where both Jack and Isabelle meet as Isabelle tries to sneak around the city, disguised as a commoner so she doesn't arouse attention. Jack protects her and as she escapes from the village one evening, she ends up at Jack's home, as coincidence may have it. Earlier in the day, a priest was accused of stealing some magic beans from when King Erik was alive and they are handed to Jack who accidentally drops one under the house and thus a massive beanstalk erupts from the house, taking Princess Isabelle with it.

*Overall I would say that Jack the Giant Slayer is a typical fairytale, full of clichés, saving damsels in distress and finding out that all is not what it seems in the Kingdom of Cloister. There is evil, there is betrayal, there is young love and there is a hero. I won't give anymore away but I think this film was fantastically made and it is a shame that it hasn't been as popular as it should have.*

I give this film: 8/10



## Dark Eden - Chris Beckett Review



Following our previous issue's article on Sci-Fi author Chris Beckett, *TPOM* editor Tasha decided to read his latest novel *Dark Eden* and review it!

### Tasha's Thoughts:

I was bought *Dark Eden* as a gift by my mother after meeting Chris Beckett himself the other month. I began to read it almost instantly as I am one of those people who reads about 5 books at the same time. However, *Dark Eden* made me abandon all other books I was reading, I was completely immersed in this.

Beckett promotes an interesting concept in this book - a planet that is clouded in darkness, other than the dim light from the stars in the sky and from lamps that shine from trees as well as some animals. The characters are descendants of two humans who were abandoned on Eden (Angela and Tommy) many years ago after a malfunction with their spaceship resulted in their waiting for their entire lives for the return of the spaceship and consequently, their return to earth.

A colony of the descendants of Angela and Tommy were created as a result, each in small living groups that all unite every year to remember the story of how they came to be on Eden and how they must wait for



their rescue. The main character, John Redlantern demands change and acceptance that rescue may not be possible. Though he is the protagonist, the reader also gets to see chapters from other characters perspectives such as John's love interest Tina, and some of what are known as the 'Elders' themselves.

It was extremely interesting to see the world that Beckett has created from the way that they live down to the way they discuss phrases that we use every day as if they were just a distant myth (electricity, trains, cars.) There was always something new waiting around the corner, and it kept me on tenterhooks the entire way through. *Dark Eden* has safely secured its place as one of my favourite science fiction books, and I can't wait to read Beckett's upcoming sequel.

Rating: 10/10



MARVEL

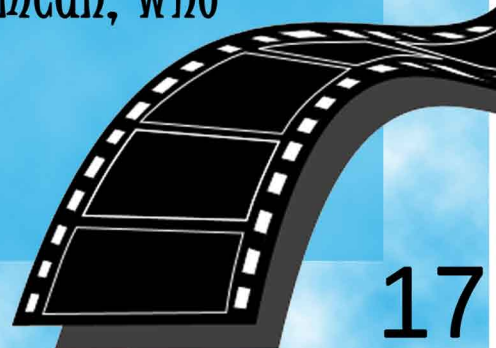
# IRON MAN 3

Very recently both TPOM editors went to watch *Iron Man 3* in *IMAX 3D*, and despite not accounting for it to be in this issue we have decided, as it is the essence of Sci-Fi, to review it briefly.

Well, to put it simply, it was a truly amazing film! Full of action and humour and drama, it had it all. Taking place after the events of New York (*The Avengers*) things have changed in Tony's life. And they're about to get a whole lot worse.

Not to give anything away, but things don't pan out exactly as you expect and this kept the film really interesting and edge-of-your-seat worthy.

Overall, we would definitely recommend going to pay Mr Tony Stark a visit in a cinema near you. I mean, who wouldn't right?





*And what about the **Next Issue?***



**Time is Running Out.**

More info will be available soon at

[www.theseuspublishing.weebly.com](http://www.theseuspublishing.weebly.com)