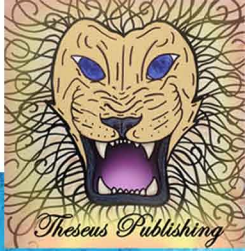


Issue 8  September/October 2013



Theaeus Publishing Online Magazine

Home to a variety of Sci-Fi and Fantasy Short Stories.

What's Unique in this Edition?

Editors:

Becky Hayes
and

Tasha Williams

***TPOM's
first year
anniversary***

***'CREATURES OF
THE NIGHT'
FLASH FICTION***

And an in-depth book review on the latest
fantasy sensation; *The Bone Season*.



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Join us in celebrating **TPOM's first year** **anniversary** with our jumbo edition!

Becky Hayes and Tasha Williams set up *Theseus Publishing Online Magazine* (TPOM) officially last September.

Now on it's 8th issue the magazine is still continuing to receive submissions and grow!



In this issue we want to celebrate a year of *TPOM*. What initially started as a simple project for a university course has now bloomed into a magazine that is read and submitted to every month. We even receive submissions that aren't just from merry old England!

We could not be more grateful for everything that has happened in the past year. We have been astounded by the quality of the work submitted over these past 8 issues, and the feedback we have received.

As just two students, juggling essays, dissertations and the general woes of our third year we never expected to still be running this magazine a year on. It just goes to show that with a bit of creativity, a whole heap of wi-fi and a passion for creating short stories, anything is possible.

So to all our writers and readers...

***Thank
You!***



50 Word Stories

Fetch by Kimberly Smith

Upon walking into the kitchen I saw myself peering into the fridge.

I waited. He turned, saw me, and dropped his fixins onto the floor.

Hands up in terror, he backed out of the room in his sock feet into the night.

Bending down, I arose with a Cuban sandwich.

Shamble and Lurch by Jay Slater

The man sprawled on the ground, unconscious but stirring. Two groaning figures, their flesh rotting away, shambled around the corner and approached him. One crouched and sniffed the air over him.

"I daresay this man has been attacked!" He straightened his tattered uniform and stood. "Constable Lurch, call the Inspector."

Just Passing by Michaela Gratton

What a scary looking place, thought Number 087543. The place in question was a blue and green planet surrounded by millions of chunks of metal. He crossed it off the list of planets to visit and flew on to the next one. Perhaps they aren't ready after all he thought.

Night Light by D J Rowe

The evidence was clear.
A night light burned out.
Crayon pictures of monsters drawn on walls.
A doll ripped in half.
Girl with her legs ripped off.
Another senseless case of M.U.B; Monster Under the Bed.
When were parents going to learn?
One light was never enough.

Sleep Tight by Jay Slater

"School in the morning. Sleep tight," her mother chirped, turning off the lights and closing the door.

Silver moonlight, leaking between the curtains, replaced the lamp's warm glow. On her windowsill, her dolls stood, throwing dancing jagged shadows against the bedroom wall. "Yes," they said in unison, singsong. "Good night."

What's the Worst? by D J Rowe

I know that I was drunk and my mother always warned me to be careful.
But when the guy offered me a ride, I thought, what's the worst that could happen?

Hard Feelings by Williw Warren

Crimson drapes wafted across his moonlit window, casting the star's glow in an ominous light. Undulating hues unhinged his unsettled nerves. As his feet met the floor, he had barely a fleeting moment to register the minacious presence before the abrupt obliteration of his skull quieted his thoughts.

Blinded by Izzy Davies

His daughter was becoming a monster but Mark wouldn't accept it. She was merely ill. The wings didn't matter. Nor did the red eyes or the scaly skin. Her claws were a new addition, but nothing mindblowing. Except her eating the neighbours dog - that may be harder to disguise.

For this issue, in the spirit of Halloween, our *Flash Fiction* theme was:



(CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Spooky spirits, magic mages, lost creatures of the night and domesticated witches;
it's all in this
issue of *TPOM*!

Enjoy



A Gathering by Kimberly Williams

‘Welcome to Books by the Dozens! Can we help you find anything?’ The cheerful girl behind the counter leaned forward in her earnestness, almost toppling into the floor.

Bethelda had strode in, hood and mantle up around her head, with a purpose. She needed to buy a cookbook. An honest-to-goodness cookbook, none of that ‘a mulatto baby’s arm and three rotten oranges’ crap this time. She was throwing a proper dinner party for all her friends and there was no magic involved. Bethelda planned to do all the cooking herself. She ignored the cheerful girl, glaring momentarily at her overly pinked cheeks, and walked into the “Cooking” section of the Dozens. She stood staring into the shelf for almost an hour before deciding, holding her hoary hand to her hirsute chin. It had been a rainy week, good for picking frogs but not much else, Bethelda mused.

She then decided a book of Hearty Soups and Stews for Gatherings was the ticket for today’s gathering of her friends and acquaintances, old women from all over America who were turning out their best stockings for Bethelda’s dinners were touted as the absolute best witch-dinners.

Wiping the sweat from her forehead and stooping to wring it from her hair, Bethelda admired the five bubbling cauldrons filled with soup. First a nice crab and corn chowder, followed by a classic chicken noodle, a tomato bisque, a vegetarian chili, and finally a beef stew filled with carrots and parsnips. Her cave of an apartment smelled wonderful, although it was filled with the carcasses of multiple animals and vegetable peelings of all kinds. Bethelda grumbled as she scooped it into a garbage bag with

one hand. Why had she decided against using magic? Her apartment became positively beastly when she swore off magic.

After three days of hard work, they were arriving. Bethelda heard them outside the door, stamping their feet and shaking the rain from their bodies like great dogs. She ran to the door and stopped herself, regulated her breathing, and then opened it to find a bevy of hags pressing forward to gain entry to her home. Agnes McCree, the oldest witch among them, lifted her nose and sniffed twice. The hairs protruding from her nose quivered and the other witches watched in silence as Agnes turned her gaze to Bethelda.

‘What do we have cooking here? It smells delicious and curiously...clean and wholesome.’ And Agnes promptly scooted off to the kitchen for a closer look amid cries concerning Bethelda’s experimentation with cleanliness. The women looked at her apartment for the first time, realizing indeed just how clean it was and how it only smelled of the delicious food simmering in the kitchen. They were appalled and took it upon themselves to sprinkle different types of dirt and moss on the floor and furniture while their familiars emerged from bags, valises, and satchels to mark their territory. Cats, rats, snakes, toads, and birds of all kinds vaulted and skittered across Bethelda’s apartment, leaving waxy trails and hair behind them.

Agnes returned from the kitchen holding a spoon above her head like a scepter. It glinted in the light from Bethelda’s vanilla-scented candles. She cowered as Agnes rallied the witches. Into the kitchen they went, toppling the chicken soup pot, dousing the floor with it and soaking a few

familiars. Bethelda watched in horror as they added ingredients to the other pots: bloody hearts, small limbs, assorted fingers and toes were all added and mixed in. Agnes turned to Bethelda, smiling, and said, 'There now poppet. I always have to correct your cooking when I come to visit.'

Apprentice by DJ Rowe

‘Why does this always happen when I’m with you?’ asked Miranda.

‘Honestly, it has nothing to do with you. It has everything to do with Peter,’ replied Ty as he looked on from the corner where he leaned against the brickwork.

Several youth, dressed in apocalypse hoods and robes, turned at Ty’s words and began to threaten him with their sacrificial knives.

‘Whoa! I’m just here to watch. You just keep going with your chicken blood and summoning of Aetheric the Blood King of Kuffu,’ said Ty holding up his hands to show he wasn’t packing any sort of heat.

The youths with the knives were not willing to accept spectators until Ty touched the ring on his left hand and brought forth heat in the form of a summoned phoenix.

Nothing says high end mage like a phoenix that is capable of reducing steel to liquid slush in less than five seconds.

‘You’re just here to watch?’ asked the leader of the youths.

‘Yup, you’re not on my list,’ replied Ty peering around his flaming guardian.

‘List? What list?’

‘The apprentice list. When we divided up names, Peter got you and I got others.’

‘Apprentice? I’m not this man’s apprentice,’ says the youth pointing with his knife at the half naked man tied to a slab inside of a ritual circle made of blood and candles.

‘You know this idiot?’ challenges Miranda as she turns to Peter.

‘Well, know is such a broad definition,’ Peter starts.

‘Bastard,’ spits Miranda. ‘I was almost beginning to feel sorry for you but if your idea of a date is getting black bagged and dragged into some ruin for sacrifice then you

can find yourself another girl friend.'

'Hey, I had no idea that this was going to happen. It's not like Sidney, here, shared his plans with me.'

'It's Sy. Only my mom calls me Sidney and once I get the power of Cathor the Five Hundred Eyed Serpent of Desolation then she will only call me master.'

'Cathor?' asks Ty. 'Your penmanship of early Persian is atrocious. You really need to work on your consonants.'

'I thought you weren't getting involved, old man?' accused Sy.

'Sorry, my bad. I'd just watch my loops and lines for accuracy. Spelling a name wrong can have really bad consequences but it's your ritual. I'm just observing. By the way, did you just call me old?'

'So, are you just going to lay there and allow these punks to sacrifice you and me?' asked Miranda looking at Peter.

'Hey, it's not very easy to do much when you are tied up and have half a dozen people preparing to sacrifice your blood to some Asura.'

'Well, excuse me if I'm rushing you but I don't feel like joining you on the Asura banquet table.'

'Hey, hey, there's going to be no stopping this ceremony,' said Sy. 'And there is no way that I'd want to be the apprentice of some has been mage that can be jumped by me and my boys. The only thing you're good for is feeding Cathor's blood thirst.'

'Maybe. Maybe, I am a bit over the hill at the grand age of thirty-six. Then again,' Peter says as he flexes his fingers slightly, 'I might have a few things to teach you.'

For a few seconds, the people in the room held their collective breath waiting for something to happen.

'Was that it?' asked Sy. 'I guess you better kiss your ass good-bye.'

Sy stepped up to the circle and began to chant the last

verses of summoning as blood began to flow from several slashes on Peter's arms and legs.

A darkness took over the stones and crept along the flesh. 'Hear me, Cathor. Accept my offering and grant me thy darkest power.'

Suddenly the darkness began to eat Sy's flesh and his screams rattled the souls of his followers.

Peter then sat up, his bindings falling free.

'Back to thy prison. Light of the Devas set thy bars and seal they locks.'

The darkness fell back dropping Sy. His flesh ripped and torn in long lines like it had been mauled by a tiger.

Panting, Sy, asked, 'What did you do?'

Peter pointed at a small bug that was smeared in blood.

'I couldn't do much while tied up but I could direct that bug to smear the lines on your circle. You always have to check that the circle is intact.'

'Yes, master.'

Nightmare by Jay Slater

Moonlight shone between the clouds as they began to part, dropping their last few flurries upon the town below. The snowflakes drifted down to join a thick layer already blanketing the steep-roofed buildings, which huddled together inside a wooden palisade nestled into the side of a hill. Below, the river meandered past.

A dark shape flitted through the sky, blotting out the moon.

A man laid upon the bed in the corner of the room. Death had not taken him quietly. A twisted grimace marred his face, his back arched off the bed, and his hands clenched at the blanket. Two more men stepped inside. One wore a tabard with the crest of the local lord; the other wore furs and carried a staff. A chisel hung at his belt. 'Here is the third, magiker. Ansgar Gylfirsson the weaver,' said the guard.

Arnar Rasmussen shook his head. 'He was a dreamseer, a fortune teller. The aendesmagiker know of him. Knew. When was he killed?'

'The night after the second, who died two nights after the first.'

Rasmussen frowned. 'I must think over the possibilities. You will find me at the lodge.'

Rasmussen looked into the generous tankard of ale before him. He raised it to the lodgekeeper in thanks.

His staff leaned against the table next to him, and he regarded the runes inscribed upon it as he thought. The dead bore all the marks of attack by spirits, but why? Neither moon was full. A dreamseer didn't deal with spirits powerful enough to kill a man, even a sleeping man—a man at his weakest. No malevolent spirit which could take a life would

limit itself to one a day.

Now, if Gylfirsson the weaver were a dreamweaver, Rasmussen thought, that was an idea with more promise. A dreamweaver could have delved into things beyond his ken. If he came across a nightmare spirit just a shade cleverer than the norm, it might have convinced him to make a deal. He could not have paid a dream-eater's price. First, it came for those whose dreams he had rewritten. Once it had consumed them, filling their minds with unspeakable terrors, it turned back toward Gylfirsson.

If that was so, Rasmussen had less time than he thought. He took his staff and made for the door.

The still air had a crispness to it which might have been pleasant on another night. Tonight, Arnar Rasmussen could almost feel it crackling with magical energy. A dream-eater which had feasted upon the spirits of three living things was not far from becoming a danger to the waking and sleeping alike. It would be hunting tonight.

So would Rasmussen. He was an aendesmagiker, and spirits—the breath of the world—were his domain, whether it be harnessing them or destroying them. He stopped at the door to Ansgar Gylfirsson's house, rapping on the door with the end of his staff. Nobody answered, so he pushed it open and went inside. With no lamps burning, it was pitch-dark, but Rasmussen saw by the spirit-light. He looked past their teeming multitudes and spotted his target: a black tendril, filling the room with the stench of terror. It wound around the bed and stretched toward the door, oozing out into the street. Rasmussen followed it.

It led him on a roundabout path through narrow streets, which ended at another house, larger than the last. The

nightmare coiled around it. Rasmussen rattled the door in its frame with his staff. A few moments later, a tall man pulled it open.

Rasmussen barred the way out with his staff. ‘Gylfirsson the weaver. You knew he was a weaver of dreams?’

‘I don't know what—’

‘Your lives are in grave danger.’ Rasmussen glanced over his shoulder. ‘I am a magiker. Go inside now. Gather your family. Stay inside and stay awake. Don't come out until I come in. Do you understand?’

‘Yes—’

Rasmussen pulled the door closed and took his chisel from his belt, inscribing a row of runes—words of warding—into the wood.

From behind him came a scream. He turned, and the shade reached into his mind. It showed him itself made manifest—gnarled, vast and terrible, ancient beyond comprehension.

Rasmussen stepped back before the assault, head bowed. Seconds passed before he looked up, fire in his eyes, and laughed. The shade flinched. Rasmussen raised his staff, roared in defiance, and charged into battle.

The Agent by Steven Bridenbaugh

What am I? That's not an easy question to answer. I have taken so many different identities, over the years, that one would think that I would lose my sense of self. But I know who I am.

My story begins too long ago to mean anything to anyone else now. But I am a creature of the present tense, more than anything. I currently live and work in Washington, where I have made myself useful to the government in countless ways. They don't really care how I get the information they need, or how I carry out the tasks they give me. And they don't ask questions.

I have a few very particular needs. I live on a cycle: every 36 days, I take a walk, in the middle of the night. The night time is actually the safest time to do this, as my senses are much more acute then. When traveling, I try to take a form that will create the least suspicion.

Once, I was thinking about Abraham Lincoln, how he used to take long walks on sleepless nights, and I inadvertently became Lincoln, walking down the street. A few passersby were amused, but not overly surprised by that. If I see police, I usually become a cat. Nobody thinks much about seeing a cat, at night.

The reason that I walk is that I must return to my original form, once every 36 days, and I seek the safety of the night to do this. I can go into a park, or a natural area, and do it there. I'm vulnerable at these times, in several ways.

I have one valuable possession, which I might describe as a crystal, without which I will die. Once, I slept with a prostitute, and I woke up to find that she was trying to pry the stone out of my ring. I killed her with one bite. My venom is comparable to that of a cobra. It is a swift death, but painless. I was originally, and can, at anytime I wish to be, a snake.

Other snakes are terrified of me. I almost never see one, when I am out in the wilderness. I avoid going to zoos, because they become quite agitated in my presence. If a snake approaches me in the wild, it is not a snake per se, but a minor shape shifter, like me, but only capable of assuming the form of rabbits and pigs, that sort of thing. Some of them may be my children, but I have lived so long, I can't remember much of my numerous escapades, usually while intoxicated.

There are only three of us in this world. One, my great love, the White Lady, always lives at a distance from me, mostly for our mutual safety, because when we are together, we have been attacked. The last time I received any information from her, was a package sent from China. Everything that we are goes back to ancient China. My dreams are haunted by ancient villages and bamboo forests, and the strong, happy people toiling in the fields. She sent me a pound of mushroom, an aphrodisiac which is actually a fungus which grows on the bodies of caterpillars in Nepal.

The other creature in my world, and the one I most fear, appears most of the time as a Chinese monk, though he is also reptile, like me, and a wizard, at heart. He claims that he was Lao-Tzu in the distant past, but that is a lie. He is

evil, and seeks the crystal wherever he can find it, that he may consume it, to increase his power. If he should successfully entrap me, my options would be limited. One form I cannot assume, and come back again, is to become a dragon. To do that is to become formless, like the wind, like fire or clouds. I would still exist, but not in the human world that I love. Everything changes, but there is a loss in this. The world today is a wasteland compared to the forest primeval, which is still a part of me, though irretrievably lost. I am a predator, and I must kill, but I would say that once I had highly developed sensitivities, even humility and a sense of justice. Perhaps, I will eventually take this route of escape from the cares of this planet, and spend my end of days, a lonely wind wailing at the sadness of the ages.

The Bone Season

Review by Tasha Williams

To put it out there right away, *The Bone Season* is the best book that I have read in 2013. I'd even go as far to say it's the best debut novel/series opening that I have read in a VERY long time. And that's saying something. So here we go,

The Bone Season is a new Young Adult Dystopian-style novel written by debut author **Samantha Shannon**. The novel focuses around a girl named Paige Mahoney who lives in the London branch of Scion, a very controlling sort of place run by government that focus on prohibiting clairvoyance in all it's types. Paige in particular is a dreamwalker, one of the rarest forms of clairvoyant - who '*commits high treason just by breathing.*' She uses her skill to make money which is seen as '*downright sin*' by Scion. She remains within the crime syndicate as the people she works with make her feel accepted in a world that is so repulsed by the mere thought of what she is.

This all changes one day when Paige commits a crime that could ruin her life forever. As a result of this, she ends up in the mysterious place known as Sheol I; a place where clairvoyants are sent to serve an other-worldly race known only as the Rephaim. It is then that Paige realises how her dreamwalker status could prove deadly and lifesaving at the same time.

This novel is fast paced, full of action and pulls at your

heartstrings numerous times. Paige isn't perfect, which is what makes *The Bone Season* truly wonderful. As a reader you get to see her flaws and her decision making process. You also witness her strange feelings towards the other clairvoyants and members of the Rephaim that she meets - in particular, Warden, her guardian.

I am so happy that *The Bone Season* has been signed on as a seven part series, and has also had the movie rights picked up by Andy Serkis and *20th Century Fox*. I have said this many times to friends and fellow readers, and I will say it again; *The Bone Season* is going to be the next big hit. It is going to take the world by storm in time, and you'd better be ready when it does. Read it now. You will not regret it!

Overall, I give this book:

10/10



National Novel Writing Month

November 1st-30th Thirty days and nights of literary abandon!

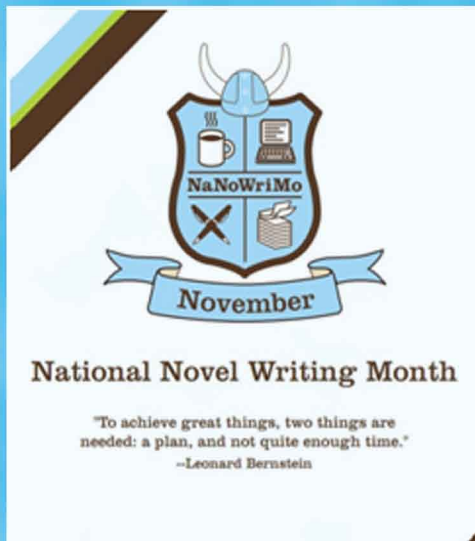
NANOWRIMO 2013 - IT'S NEARLY HERE! By Tasha Williams

It's nearly been a year but it's still back with a bang! That's right guys *National Novel Writing Month* (more commonly known as *NaNoWriMo*) is nearly here! For those of you who are wondering 'what the heck is this?' *NaNoWriMo* is an intense 30 day writing challenge where you write a novel in a month. Yep. You heard me. A MONTH! *But how on earth do you do that?*



Well, other than cutting off your social life, drinking a lot of coffee and typing until your fingers fall off, it's pretty simple!

1667 words a day for a goal of 50,000 words in the month! It's all about getting the words down, not sitting



down stressing out about chapters and what goes in them. It's a huge flow of consciousness, which you can plan for as much or as little as you want in advance. The wonder of *NaNoWriMo* is that people do it ALL OVER THE WORLD! So on the forums at www.nanowrimo.org you can speak to people as they too struggle to get to their word count goal. You can share stresses, you can share triumphs, you

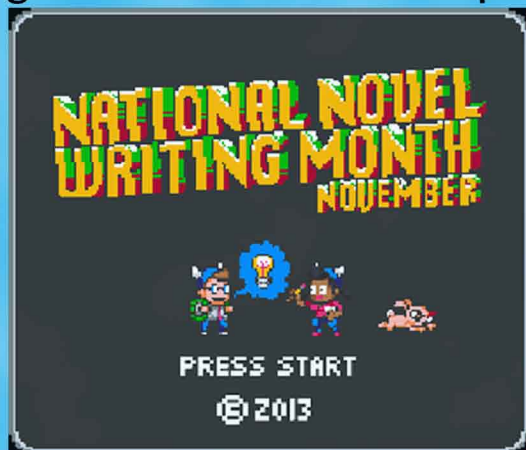
can even ask for help on names, research and plot points that aren't quite working for you but you can't work out why.

Most places in the world have a local *NaNo* representative who organises meet ups in your area as well as write-ins, so you can even get help in your local community!

These can also be discovered on the website that I listed before. I am going to my first write ins this year and I am extremely excited to meet writers in my community!

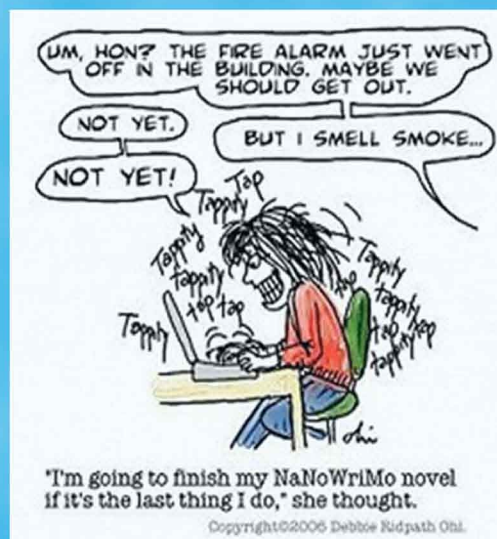
NaNoWriMo was started by Chris Baty and is run by a charity called The Office of Letters and Light. They run other events such as the Young Writers Program and Camp *NaNoWriMo*, which encourage and teach people how to write as well as promoting a love of the skill itself! Every donation helps run one of these events, host workshops and generally promote writing. It's wonderful!

I completed *NaNoWriMo* for the first time last year and I got to 51,000 words upon completing (1k over, woo!) I



wrote a Chick Lit novel that I literally had planned ONE line of (you're not allowed to write ANY of your story before November, just plans remember!) and I managed to finish it and it's become a great novel that I'm so proud of!

It is truly a way to get creative ideas, it's not easy but it's so rewarding. After 30 difficult days you have a complete first



draft ready to be edited. A lot of authors take months and months just to get half a first draft so how amazing to get one in a month! It doesn't matter about the quality, first drafts are meant to be full of errors, mistakes and plot holes, it's a FIRST DRAFT!

This year I'm aiming for 70,000 words, and I truly can't wait. Bring on all the hard work, people grab your pens and respective keyboards and get writing.



HAPPY NANOWRIMO!!!

Tasha

And what about the Next Issue?

'AN UNEXPECTED GIFT'



(What type of 'gift' is totally up to you.)

More info will be available soon at:
www.theseuspublishing.weebly.com