

VOL. 1

# DREAD



**THE SINISTER SIDE  
OF FURRY FICTION**



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Horror is that odd variable that lingers inside your skull; the worst case scenario you think couldn't happen, but knowing there's a chance leaves you anxious. Dread was created out of an interest in blending furry fiction with harsh, realistic horror. The idea was to take incidents that could happen, whether mildly supernatural, or grounded by people, and force anthropomorphic characters to suffer through each brief experience. This volume features ten disturbing tales of quick fiction.

Flash fiction is a difficult art. Like poetry, the author has to remain concise while giving the reader the whole picture. Though moments are short, there are several elements that come out in a single scene. Dread focuses on finding the balance between engulfing the reader in its horror and remaining brief in each story.

I could tell you to tread with caution. Every other horror project carries the same warning. Instead, dive in. Head first. Explore each quick grenade carelessly; the ride is only as bumpy as you make it.

Until next time

Weasel

The Dude

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**DREAD**



## MY FIRST FURSUIT NATHANIAL “LECOUNT” EDWARDS

Despite the surging excitement in my body, I tried to steady the shaking of my limbs as I finished stitching the final arm of my suit on. I had to be careful--had to make sure the stitches were hidden underneath the rusty-red fur. The suit, my suit, had to look as life-like as possible.

Finally, I finished and stood back to admire my handiwork. It was glorious. Even though up-close the fur looked a little patch-work(a by-product of having to scavenge it from several different sources) from this distance it looked life-like almost like a real fox was laying on the table in front of me.

I walked back over to the table and stroked the arm of the suit, being careful not to let any of the blood or pus from the sores covering my arms ooze onto the silky smooth fur. I had taken such care to get the fur clean after obtaining it, there was no reason to get it dirty once again.

But, it still needed one more finishing touch. The tail. That fluffy, soft, wonderful fur covered appendage.

It was truly the thing I missed most--cuddling it on cold nights, holding it for reassurance, feeling it swish behind me as I walked, knowing it was the center of attention.

Well, the center of attention in a good way. Not like the horrible, bald, scab-covered, thin, PIECE OF SHIT I HAD NOW!

I stopped and took a deep breath to calm myself, noticing that my claws were beginning to dig into the wood of the tabletop. It would be fine. Soon I would be beautiful again. Soon this nightmare would be over. It would be fine. It would be fine. It would be fine.

As I repeated that calming mantra in my head, I walked over to the table that held my materials and looked it over. Patches of unused fur sat on shelves alongside bobbins of thread and packages of needles and a few glass jars full of teeth that I had worked so hard to collect. But really, what drew my eye most was what sat on the table itself.

I had searched for weeks, trying to find the perfect source to use for my tail. The fur had to be voluminous, bright, glossy, beautiful. And then, last night I found him.

I was walking home and saw the fox exit the corner convenience store. His tail, that magnificent tail, swished behind him with each step. I was captivated.

So I followed him. It was easy to catch him. He wasn't careful at all. He had parked his car next to a dark alley and nobody else was around. All it took was one little hit to the back of the head and he was unconscious, then all it took was a short drive home in my own car and I had plenty of drugs to keep him that way.

Would it have been easier to just dispose of him? Yeah, probably. But then my materials wouldn't be fresh. That glossy shine could fade. And, well, that just wouldn't do.

So, I picked up the sharp knife sitting on the table and carefully, so so carefully, began to saw through flesh and bone and muscle.

On the table my source let out a pained moan and began to squirm. I pulled the knife away quickly, afraid that the movement would cause me to ruin that perfect tail. How dare he wake up now of all times!

He must not of realized I didn't need him alive anymore.

I quickly slid my knife across the soft flesh of his throat and held his body while he squirmed, blood seeping out across the already stained wood of the table, the rich-coppery scent making me lick my maw in hunger, excited to use the leftover materials to cook my next meal.

When I was sure he was dead, I turned back to my work. With each cut of the knife I was closer and closer to having my old life back. A life before the fire and the burns. When I was beautiful. When everyone wanted me and didn't look at me with pity and barely hid revulsion.

With a final thunk the tail came free and I held it up in the light, looking at it with barely contained glee.

Soon my first full body suit would be complete. But, why stop my new hobby now? After all, there was still so much material out there to make another.

## CAT PROBLEMS

### JAMES STONE

Roger was a cat person. There's no end to the irony of a big Golden Lab guy with cats for pets. It started years ago with one gray kitten. One became two, then a handful. He had fifteen cats at his peak. They were always around. Sleeping on his lap. Brushing by his legs. Little purring reminders that he wasn't alone, and that he was loved.

One by one over the years, Roger's beloved cats passed away. Some were old and some died of cancer. He didn't get any new cats. That would feel like betrayal. Like he was cheating the memory of little Jeeves. Of Rory. Of Sally and Splinter and Beruthiel. At last only old Scratch, his one black cat, was left to keep Roger company in his lonely house.

Roger was a programmer. He worked from home, and it made him depressed. He didn't see a lot of people, at least not in any meaningful way. He knew the name of the cashier at the grocery, and the cashier always asked about Roger's cats.

Cat.

Still, Roger didn't get any real attention from anyone other than Scratch. As Roger would sit in the dark back corner of his basement and type line after line of code, he sometimes wondered what he would do when Scratch was gone. He was a loyal guy. He couldn't replace any of them. What would he

do when he woke up at 3am if there wasn't a little purring bundle weighing his chest down?

To be honest, the thought made Roger very anxious.

He had told the doctor this a while back, and the doctor kinda shook his head understandingly. He gave Roger some pills to help with his anxiety. Not for all the time. Just for those times when Roger felt his ears going back and his hackles raising and a deep *growlllll* starting back in his throat. He'd reach up to the shelf and take down his pill bottle and shake out a pill. Then he'd walk over to the basement mini-fridge and pull out a slice of American cheese. He'd unwrap it carefully, and wad it up around his pill, and then gobble it down hurriedly. His tail would wag as he imagined it working already to make him less of a scaredy-cat. Scaredy-dog.

One day, after an ears-hackles-growllll session, Roger was sitting at his computer. He was trying to figure out why his *methods* in his *class* weren't being recognized by his *package*. Old Scratch was rubbing against his legs and meowing. Roger was trying to concentrate so he would reach a paw down and maybe get a brush of Scratch's tail before the cat disappeared under the desk out of reach, and Roger returned his paw to the keyboard only to reach down again the next time Scratch's dark form wandered past his legs.

At one point, Scratch well...scratched him. Roger yelped and yanked his paw back. He looked at it in the glow of his monitor and a trickle of dark blood dripped down his pawpad. He stuck his finger in his muzzle and sucked on it, whimpering a little. Anyone who's owned a cat has got scratched before, but Scratch was always a nice cat in that way and had never scratched or bit Roger. Roger felt a little betrayed as he sucked on his wounded finger and tasted his blood.

He decided he was tasting too much blood and needed a bandaid. He started to get up and glanced across the room

only to see Scratch curled up and blissfully asleep in Roger's easy chair. How had Scratch got over there so quickly and fallen asleep so soundly, thought Roger. He was still thinking about this when his leg was brushed again—under the desk—by *something*.

Roger glanced again at the sleeping Scratch. He felt that his hackles would have been raising, and his ears would have been going back, and his throat would have been growly except that pill he took was doing whatever it did. If it hadn't been doing that, Roger would never have had the courage to do what he did next: He slid a little backwards and looked under the desk.

Two eyes glowed red in the dim reflected gleam of the monitor. Something brushed his leg again. The two eyes became five. Then eight. Another couple things brushed his leg. Roger stopped counting eyes at eighteen. He had stopped looking altogether to be honest. Whatever it was under Roger's desk—sitting by Roger's paws—mewled and stroked his legs again. Roger knew, in that way that anyone who has owned a cat knew, what that mewling meant. He glanced up at his bottle of pills, and over at his mini-fridge with its cheese slices. He glanced over at Scratch who was now standing with his own hackles raised and his tail all puffed.

The mewling sounds changed. Roger could barely make out whispered words.

“Cat. Food.”

He turned his chair and looked back at the bag of cat food. More whispers.

“No. Food. *Cat. Please.*”

Roger looked back at Scratch. He took a deep breath, clamped his eyes shut again, and reached his bleeding finger down under his desk instead.

Mrs. Abernathy was standing on Roger's stoop, talking. He



had his head stuck through the crack in his front door as she went on and on, nervously wringing her hands and saying something about blood. Roger wasn't really listening to her. His missing finger hurt a lot, and there was a nice voice telling him what a good boy he was. The voice wasn't under his desk anymore. It seemed to come from somewhere just out-of-the-corner of his vision. His ears moved to try and hear it better but Mrs. Abernathy was now shouting about her missing son. That made Roger anxious. He wanted to shut the door to listen closer to the voice because it seemed, well, so *nice*.

Roger hadn't felt this loved in years.

CARLYLE  
T. THOMAS ABERNATHY

I watched as Carlyle opened the front door. The pale yellow flame from his lantern bounced around the entranceway, refracting across the tall, narrow mirrors and washing his face with the color of soured butter.

“Ms. James?” His voice quavered.

I tried to respond, but my voice failed me. Instead of a calm reassurance of my presence, just a harsh breath, almost a bark. Carlyle’s ears lowered. He always had been a good manservant, despite his innate rabbit nervousness. He was one of the few I trusted at this point in my life. Jasper’s murder last year had left me cold and suspicious of strangers. He was a good man, a good husband with a good pedigree, everything mother had expected of me. Now it was just me alone, with Ms. Gren to prepare meals and Carlyle, my emissary to the outside world.

“Ms. James? Are you here? I heard-”

My left arm began to flail involuntarily, nearly smashing against a display shelf full of geometric glass. One spasm, two, then nothing. It fell against my side, weak and useless. Carlyle went pale. I could see him turn back towards the front door. I urged him to leave with my entire being. He closed his eyes for a moment, and began muttering to himself. I didn’t need to hear it. He was counting. Counting to ten,

convincing himself to move forward. He'd counted when we found Jasper. He'd counted in the winter, when the gas lights of the streets were out, and I needed medicine.

"One."

He took a step down the hallway, towards the stairs that would take him to my bedroom.

"Two."

Another step. I stepped back in stride. I didn't want him to see me like this. I could only imagine his reaction.

"Three."

He reached the foot of the stairs, and put one paw on the banister. Oh, Carlyle...

"Four."

Always there when I needed him. Warm, comforting. I imagined him coming home on that winter night, medicine in hand. He took care of me. Sitting next to me on the bed, his damp shirt clinging to the muscles of his chest.

"Five."

I reached the top of the stairs. Carlyle was still ascending, midway now. I stepped towards the bedroom. I could block the door, not let him in. My leg twitched, then began to shake wildly. I fell to the floor, wanting to scream, but again, my throat could produce no sound.

"Six."

I started to crawl. My left arm was still useless. With my right, I was able to grab onto the edges of the floorboards and pull myself forward. Two feet. Three.

"Seven."

The lantern light reached the top of the stairs, thinning my cloak of shadows. He was so close...I had to stop him. I pulled harder on the floorboards, willing myself to move faster. My fingernails tore, my muscles screamed.

"Eight."

The door! I propped myself up against it. There were no

more shadows to hide in, the rabbit was too close. I no longer cared if he saw me. I needed him to stop. Please...I tried to call out again. I raised my tattered fingers to my throat and felt...nothing. There was no flesh there. Just a vacuous wet hole. I heard a ripping sound from behind the door, and my right arm began to flail. I understood then. *He* was having a feast. Tearing me apart, piece by soft, bloody piece.

“Nine.”

Carlyle had reached the bedroom. He reached out a trembling arm towards the doorknob. The arms that had once held me so tightly now passed through me with no resistance. I was a mist. I was paralyzed. I couldn't tell him to leave. Couldn't tell him that somehow, Jasper was back, and he *knew*.

Carlyle turned the knob.

“Ten.”

DINNER GUEST  
STACY BENDER

“Where is my brother? Where’s Rodger?” Adaline pushed through the front door of her brother’s house, making the leotard clad rabbit jump back in fright. Had Rodger completely gone off the deep end? Was this some bizarre con?

“Rodger told you not to come here.”

Adaline turned on the rabbit and bared her sharp teeth. Every hair on her body stood on end, including her flame red tail, announcing her anger. She glared at the cringing white rabbit with her odd pink eyes. “You might have tricked my brother into marrying you, Candy, but you’re not fooling me.”

Candy’s ears lay back on her head and for an instant Adaline thought she snarled before tears threatened to spill down her cheeks. The primal urge to sink her teeth into the rabbit’s ample flesh clawed at the back of Adaline’s mind. She balled her fists and forced the words passed her lips. “You’re not going to get his money.”

“Money? What money?”

She could not believe what she was hearing. There was no way Candy didn’t know about Rodger’s trust fund. If nothing more, the size of the ring that graced Candy’s finger should have tipped her off, but Candy’s vapid stare told otherwise.

“What’s going on here?”

Startled by the unfamiliar voice, Adaline turned to find a fashionably dressed rabbit standing in the entrance to the hallway. His eyes were a darker shade of pink, almost red. He held a steaming mug in each hand.

“Who are you?” Adaline didn’t want to accuse him of being Candy’s lover, but the words remained on the tip of her tongue.

“The name’s Edgar Mills, MD.”

Hearing the letters at the end of his name had Adaline’s heart racing and her mind going in a completely different direction. “Is Rodger okay?”

Edgar smiled. “I understand he is very well. And you are?”

She couldn’t place his accent, but it sounded as exotic as his mannerisms seemed proper.

“I’m Adaline. Rodger’s my brother.”

“Ah, yes.” Edgar’s ears twitched, and he glanced at Candy. “Candy, why don’t you finish your exercises?”

“Okay.” The fear in Candy’s eyes evaporated, replaced by childlike glee. She bounded into the next room where the sound of jazzercise resumed.

“Here, I’d say you need this just as much as I do.” Edgar held one of the mugs out to Adaline. “Don’t worry, Candy won’t notice. My sister’s a lovely girl, but she has the brain of an amoeba.”

Adaline blinked and her anger turned to confusion. “Your sister?”

“Yes. Little sister. I’m the eldest.” Edgar waved the mug in front of Adaline. “Drink up. Doctor’s orders.”

She took the mug from him and sniffed the contents. The vapor stung her nose, making her grimace. “What is it?”

“Black tea with honey and whiskey. At least, I think it’s whiskey.” Edgar stared at the contents of his own cup. “Wild Turkey maybe. I’m not sure. The label on the bottle was torn.” He took a sip and licked his lips. “Needs more ginger.”

Adaline sipped her own mug and felt the burn of both heat and alcohol. "I think it needs more tea."

"Under the circumstances are you so sure? You seemed a bit upset a few minutes ago."

"Aren't you?"

He shrugged and rubbed his thumbs over the rim of the mug. "When we were teenagers, Candy traded her virtue for a rock covered in tinfoil. The boy told her it was silver."

"You're kidding."

"I wish I was." He sighed and raised his mug to his lips but stopped and asked, "Was your family's objection to Candy more that she was an exotic dancer or that she was a rabbit?"

Adaline felt the hair on her back rise and tried to hide her discomfort by sipping her mug's contents while she debated what to say. "Mixed couples aren't that rare. I'd like to think my parents are opened minded."

"Our great-grandfather wasn't. He'd have a thing or two to say about foxes. He much preferred the company of lions and tigers. More honorable. His words, not mine."

Adaline's ears twitched. She did not like being compared to the reprobates of another time. "He lived in another age."

"An age where foxes hunted rabbits for fun. Some people have long memories."

"There's laws against that now."

"There were laws back then. Not that anyone paid any attention to them."

"So, I take it you don't like this marriage either?" Adaline glared at Edgar, wondering what he was getting at. She didn't like the feeling of being baited.

"What I think is irrelevant." Edgar's gaze wandered to the mug she held. "Would you like more?"

"No." Adaline rubbed her snout and wondered if she could drive home. "I think..." She stumbled, and Edgar grabbed her arm to help steady her.

“Are you all right? Have you eaten anything?”

“Not since this morning.”

“That settles it. You’re staying for dinner. We can’t have you getting into an accident on the way home.”

“Lettuce isn’t my style.” Adaline tried to pull away, but she felt unsteady on her feet.

“Don’t worry. Mother’s preparing a roast.”

As Edgar pulled Adaline toward the kitchen, she caught a smell that made her mouth water. It had been a while since she had a home cooked meal.

The sight of several rabbits in the large kitchen confused Adaline. They all looked up from their cutting boards and sauce pans when she and Edgar stepped into the room. “We have a guest for dinner, Mother.”

Adaline ignored everyone’s toothy smiles. Her focus was on her brother’s face. Lifeless eyes stared from the head atop the silver charger.

A plump fuzzy rabbit with red eyes and wearing a stained apron grinned. Her fangs looked out of place on her fur covered face. “I’ll need to get another roasting pan.”



TRUTH OR DARE  
THURSTON HOWL & KC ALPINUS

*So, truth or dare, Nikki?*

Uh, truth!

*Hm...what do you miss most about Larry?*

I guess I miss his smile. He had the best fangs I've ever seen.

*Cool! Uh...my turn, I guess. Dare.*

Go tell your crush how you feel.

*Ha, what if she's right here?*

Seriously? You sly dog, you!

*Oh c'mon. You couldn't figure it out? Well...your turn...truth or dare?*

Truth seems kinda boring now, so...dare!

*Ok. I dare you...to text someone dirty pics of yourself. Too far?*

Ooo, spicy. Done and done! Bradley is going to have a heart attack later. Truth or dare?

*Hmph, lucky Bradley. Uh, truth.*

Well, if you ever want one...anyways, what's the most awkward thing you've ever done during sex?

*Hm...let me think. Well, it's more gross than anything. There was one time I was just really drunk—and I mean REALLY drunk...I*

*just kinda...spewed everything on her. I felt so bad.*

Eww, not one of the worst things you've shared with me, but still gross dude. My turn and I guess truth—wait, do you smell that?

*Yeah, just Larry, don't worry about it. Truth, huh? How about... well, what do you like most about me?*

He was always disgusting. Guess he can't help it much. About you? I like how daring you are. You're never afraid of a challenge and I can trust you.

*Glad to hear it, babe. Haha. So, I guess I'll take a dare now.*

Hmm, thinking of a good one. I've got it! How about you tell Larry how you really feel about him. I bet you won't do it.

*Tell him how I feel? What, through the oven door? Want me to open it or some shit like that?*

Well duh. How the hell else are you gonna tell him? Though on second thought, I don't know if I want to smell him any more than I already am.

*I think it's more the burning fur than anything. But sure, I can do it through the door...HEY LARRY, I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE A PRICK FOR THE WAY YOU TREATED PEOPLE. YOU ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE FUCKING BETTER THAN EVERYONE ELSE, BUT GUESS WHAT? YOU WEREN'T... There, how was that?*

Heh, tell him how you really feel. Well, I guess it's my turn and I pick DARE.

*Haha, perfect. I like it when you get all ballsy. I dare you to piss in the oven. All over the fucker's ashes. Or whatever is left in there.*

Uh, I know we have our fun, but I don't have the prerequisite dick to do that. I mean, unless, of course, you're saying that I scoop him out of there and then go to work.

*Well, no shit, Sherlock. But you can...y'know...open the door a little. Straddle it or something. Be creative.*

**A light disrupts the dark. You can feel something warm and wet splash over you. You hear the couple more acutely now. You can no longer smell, but the liquid feels nice against your furless flesh.**

Okay, so I did it. Gotta say though, he's kinda...crispy? I mean seeing his teeth, all pointy and kinda yellowed there in the char was strangely satisfying and made me a little... hungry, if you catch my drift.

*Oh really? Well, how about we...sit a little closer for the rest of the game, huh?* And I guess I'll take a truth for my next one, Nix.

Who was your favorite, Andy or Jessica and why? And don't give me none of that bullshit about easy conquests. Who really gave you that thrill of the first time?

*Oh, it was definitely Jessica. The bitch was such a tease. And the whole time, she was fucking Larry anyway. You are right though, both easy conquests heh. And besides...she had nothing on you.*

I think we both knew that. Knowing that made it easier to slit her throat one night after drinks. Despite burying her somewhere deep and dark, I still feel a little jealous when I have to think of her. Fucking Larry though? Ugh, he was such a twat. They deserved each other, just like I deserved

to wear his pelt as a cloak some days. Anyways, my turn. I'll take truth and don't bullshit me. Give me something interesting to work with.

*Alright, I'll give you something to work with: how much would you like to kiss me right now? Talking about Larry as a fur coat has me turned on a bit. Like...kinda want to see what it's like to rut on a rug like that.*

Kiss me? I'd like something with a little more bite to it, but sure.

Time, pain, love, hate. Emotions that are devoid of any substance or value. They mean nothing to you or the compulsion that drives you forward. The feeling of indescribable yearning, dark and ceaseless, makes you move limbs with ligaments that creak and pop or oddly enough, aren't even there. This yearning, this need, atunes the holes within your skull to the chatter.

All you know is pain. Bright, blinding pain and agony, something like having someone slather you in burning coals and then raking the flesh from your body. You don't remember much, but you remember the pain. And those giggles. You've heard those giggles before. You push against the door. It isn't locked as you remember it. You push harder, and it opens. You see the couple, a male Rottweiler and a female African wild dog, sitting in the next room. Your flesh is black and charred. Your lids have burned up, leaving wide, glazed eyes. Your ears are melted over, leaving pinprick holes from which you can hear. Your claws are still in the oven, part of the ashes. But your fangs...they are still sharp. You open your mouth wide as you crawl into the room. The mating couple does not know you are there until you can already taste the blood of the African wild dog in your mouth.

## RELAX

CEILIDH NEWBURY

My problem was anger. Or at least that's what everyone used to tell me: I was the quintessential Feisty Ginger. If you asked me, I would have told you that my problem was actually everyone else. But after what my supervisor called The Incident, I was forced to reconsider my position.

It wasn't so bad, just a spat between co-workers. It became a "problem" when I used my claws to solve it. So, I was put on mandatory leave to think things over.

"You have to relax," my supervisor told me. "Go on holiday, kick box, do yoga. Whatever the fuck it is, don't come back until you've got a handle on your temper."

I didn't want to lose my job, so I did all those things. Unfortunately, they all made me angry. On holiday at the beach, the sand got in my ears, in between my toes and up my nose. The gym was full of sweaty, smelly, gross ferrets, whose wormy bodies made me want to scream. And I was kicked out of self-defence classes when they discovered that I would rather attack.

I tried to stick with yoga though, if only for the cute bunny that was the instructor. She always wore hot pink spandex and tied her ears behind her head. I always sat to the side, getting a nice view of her little puff of a tail. I wanted to bat at that fuzzy little thing. Or maybe cut it off and take it home

with me.

Instead, I stretched my arms up to the ceiling on command; let them float down to my toes. Followed all of her instructions, no matter how stupid they were. There were other rabbits there too, always wearing tight clothes and never having to come out of poses. I hated them for that.

I'd just failed, once again, to keep up the infuriatingly named Downward Dog. I eased myself down onto my knees, stretching out my clicking shoulders.

"It's okay, Kitty Cat," said Bunny in my ear. "Next time."

I bared my teeth at the ground, breathing hard. My heart thumped in my ears; relief interrupted by the tense feeling I get when being watched.

"And when you're ready, lie on your back, it's time for relaxation," said Bunny to the room.

I plopped myself down onto the sweaty mat, and rolled onto my back, fur sticky and frizzed up. I hated relaxation the most.

"Close your eyes."

I growled, deep in my chest so only I could hear. I hoped.

"Take a deep breath, and let it all out with a sigh."

I sighed long and loud. The whole thing made me sigh.

"And feel yourself melting away."

*I'd rather get up and walk away.*

"Your eyes melting back into your brain."

*What?* My ears twitched back as tiny feet padded past my head.

"Let it all go, Kitty."

I opened my eyes. I couldn't help it. She was standing above me, nose twitching, sniffing.

"Let yourself melt into the ground." She knelt down beside me and stroked my cheek.

My fur bristled. I put my ears back and hissed softly.

"Just relax." Bunny's tiny paws scratched underneath my

chin and my eyes closed of their own volition. The purr bubbled up my throat. It had been a long time since anyone had scratched my chin.

“Relax,” she said, drawing out the last syllable. I could hardly hear her over my own purring.

The scratching stopped and I lifted my head, trying to follow it. But there was something else at my neck now.

“Relax,” her lips said into my neck.

Spit slicked my fur and I started to growl again. I tried to lift my arms, but Bunny held them down with her little hands. I pushed against them, but they were much stronger than they ought to be.

Long buckteeth slid against my throat, not biting, but about to. I opened my eyes and saw a blur of grey fur. I let out my claws, but she was too strong. I looked from side to side and there were more feet. The yoga bitches were watching.

I pulled at those tiny hands. My heart beating in my ears, my hair sticking up everywhere, my eyes wide and my tail flicking uselessly between my legs.

“Relax,” said Bunny. “It won’t hurt.”

But it did. Big long buckteeth pushed deep into my neck and I shuddered as the pain, warm and bright cascaded down my spine. My vision was blurry, my neck was warm, my fur was puffing out and I was kicking my back legs.

Bunny was slurping at my blood-matted fur, hands still tightly clenched around my arms.

Around me the bitches were chanting in soft voices, “Relax.”

I nearly did. I nearly let it all go. Maybe it would be for the best.

As I started to relax my arms, slide into the pain and accept my fate, her grip on me slackened and something inside me clicked.

I reared up and pushed her to the floor, springing to my

feet, holding my claws out in front of me. She smiled at me with blood red lips, bright drips of it trickling onto her spandex. I didn't stick around to see what she did next.

I shouldered through the other bunnies, they reached for me with grabbing fingers. I kept going, pushing and clawing at anything in my way. I tripped on one of the yoga mats and landed hard on my shoulder. So I embraced it. I pushed up on all fours and ran full pelt to the door. I could feel the satisfying shred of yoga mat plastic under me.

I heard Bunny screaming behind me and I burst out of the studio and onto the street, hissing and spitting and rearing up like some kind of savage. I was getting looks, but I kept running, on all fours, hurtling across the street. Cars swerved, horns honked.

Yoga didn't work for me.



## MONSTER IN THE BASEMENT

ALICE CLAWFORD

First time poster, long time lurker. For context, I'm a twenty-two year old saber toothed tiger, average height, with white fur and black accents. This happened a few years ago during the summer, when my friend was out on holiday. She invited me to house-sit, which I did, because I'd rather stay there than in my shitty apartment. Her house had a huge flat-screen TV almost as long as the sofa, and my first few nights were spent watching reruns of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*.

Everything went by relatively normally, with me raiding the pantries, and the cats running away every time I entered a room. On the third or fourth night however, a horribly loud metal-on-metal banging sound erupted from the basement.

I was freaked out at first, I was hoping it'd just come from the TV, or that maybe I'd imagined it. When it happened again, I knew then I wasn't lucky.

I thought of going down to check it out, but I've always had this irrational fear of basements in general, probably from watching too many horror movies as a kid. I hadn't even gone down to do laundry, so the thought of going alone made my fur stand on end.

Call me a scaredy cat, but I took the wuss move, and called 999. I wasn't about to go down there by myself, even if I did feel silly about it.

I'd never called the emergency line before, so I always assumed a robot would answer. Instead, an actual person picked up. "*This is the emergency line, what's your emergency?*" I was relieved, but hesitated because I felt like maybe I was just wasting everyone's time. Calling the police because I heard banging in the house? Yeah, it felt a little more stupid now that I was actually telling someone about it. Then I remember my neighbor Miss Ratty, who once called the police because another neighbour's dog barked a few times. At least it wasn't *that* stupid, so I bit the bullet.

"Hi, yeah can I have the police? Um, I'm house sitting for a friend and there was some banging noises coming from the basement. I'm not... I'm not comfortable checking it out on my own."

At least he didn't seem bothered by me asking and he answered politely. "*That's no problem, ma'am. Could you tell us the address?*" I won't post the address here, but I told him. I told him not to rush, it was probably nothing, and I was being a fool.

The operator told me not to worry and to hold the fort whilst police officers were on their way. I thanked him, feeling relieved as I put the phone down.

Whilst waiting, I wasn't able to pay any attention to the TV, and kept watching the door to hell from the corner of my eye. It was white wood, washed away from age with a bronze circular doorknob. It didn't otherwise look frightening, but just thinking of how dark and musty it must have been kept freaking me out.

Only a few minutes went by before someone was pounding vigorously on the door, almost louder than the sounds from downstairs! I jumped, startled, and rushed to open it, both nervous and thankful to have someone with me. Two huge German Shepherd officers were waiting on the other side, with actual guns drawn, and some wolves behind them.

They rushed into the house like the armed forces, their feet stampeding on the ground, going directly for the basement.

I watched them kick the door in and rush through fearlessly, putting my saber toothed self to shame. A tiger police officer stayed behind, putting an arm on my shoulder and trying to keep me calm, as it was obvious I was about to freak out. "It's okay, saber, we've got you."

My mind was still trying to wrap around what was happening. I had never seen anything like it before, something I only thought possible on TV and would never happen to me. "Wha-what?" I was flabbergasted, unsure of what to say, or how to act.

There was shouting, a horrible yowling noise that rung my ear drums, then more banging noises, when finally, a figure was dragged out of the basement. Three different officers, two wolves and a German Shepherd, were wrestling with a deranged leopard, who was writhing viciously, despite the cuffs on his wrists and ankles. His eyes were wide and manic, he glared at me with a burning hatred I didn't even know was possible. It's a look I'll never forget.

One of the German Shepherd cops followed behind, holding a machete with scratches and paint chips, as well as a slightly dulled blade. I didn't even have a chance to ask what was going on before he told the tiger cop behind me. "He was banging his machete on the washing machine. He must've been trying to lure her down."

I felt sick, closing my eyes to not look at the leopard as they carried him, snarling and screeching psychotically, out of the house.

I was too shocked to say much, but I did manage to ask them how they knew to come so quickly. They told me that, after I hung up, they heard a click on the line. They knew someone had been listening in on the call.

I still haven't fully recovered from the ordeal and I have

a hard time thinking about it. I refuse to even step into any house that has a basement. My friend moved shortly after, and we no longer speak. I don't think I'll ever be able to stop thinking about that look, or what I had done to make him choose me as his victim.

INSOMNIA  
ALISON CYBE

I couldn't sleep.

It was the third such night in a row, and I huddled beneath the bed covers, hoping that the chill in the December air would soon ease. My paws were cold; I tried to kick the duvet down over them in protection. Once again I wished the small heater that sat in the corner of the room had some higher setting.

I rolled onto my back and stared up into the ceiling. Four months, I thought to myself. I'd been living in this house for four months. Four months of study at the university, of stress and uncertainty of my future. Four months of living away from my family, settling now here in this small shared house in Seattle. Four months of looking out of the window and seeing the Space Needle illuminated in the distance like a lambent flame, shimmering over the houses like a towering overlord.

Four months of wondering if I'd be able to get a job. Four months of missing my family. And four months of my flatmates, their smiles strong, their hopes high, their anxieties just as hidden as my own. I closed my eyes, trying to block out the thoughts.

I'd suffered from insomnia since I was fourteen. It didn't always come, not every night. But when it did, it clawed its

way into me, digging its grip deep into my skull, filling my mind with thoughts that I just couldn't shake away. When I opened my eyes again, I looked up at the ceiling, watching the small circles in its surface.

I thought back to the first bout of insomnia, when I was fourteen. The intensity of the night had stayed with me, the sense of dwindling down, growing smaller and smaller in a vast universe. I had sat in my room at home, where I had lived for so many childhood years, a sense of growing insignificance. And I knew, without any question, that I wasn't alone.

When I say that, I don't mean that there was something in the room with me. Certainly no boogiemán under the bed, or werewolf lurking beneath the window. But I did feel a sense of an undeniable *other*, utterly alien and unknown. Not waiting in the room, but inside. If I was to describe this to a psychologist, I expect they would describe it as a fear of some part of my own psychology, perhaps my subconscious or something equally clinical. All I knew is that my mind was being filled with thoughts as if by some living thing, and I was not in full control. Just like right now, when all I could do was lay in the cold bedroom, with frost etched on the windows.

I thought, maybe I've lost control. That scared me, perhaps more than anything else I can imagine. The thought of losing a grasp on my own mind, to feel it slide between my fingers and to feel myself slipping down into something dark and unknown. I pictured myself on a pier, clapping on during a great storm, the waves black as if they were themselves a churning abyss. And I would fall, and plunge down into the waters, and...

No! I forced myself to sit up, the cold night air bathing my shoulders. I had to control my thoughts. They were running away from me again. I have to rein them in, maintain

control. I slumped down into the bed. I'd spend most of the day working on my studies, pouring over an analysis of Poe's poem "The Raven". A tale of a man, who is beset by memories of his lost love, epitomised in the form of an ominous raven. I thought for a moment that I knew just how the unnamed narrator felt. I looked around my room, and realised how dark it looked. "Deep into the darkness, dreaming..."

I closed my eyes again. Okay, I thought to myself, let's get back into control. Let me try some visualisation. Let me picture this creature, this horrible ravenous beast of insomnia. Let me picture it in my mind. Once I've done that, I can be rid of it, usher it away, throw it out on its ear. What would it look like?

Thin, I thought. Very lanky, spindly even. Unnaturally so. Predatory, with long claws, to dig into my thoughts. Eyes wide, cat-like pupils. Ears tall atop its head, like a stalking predator. A squat, short mubble. Mottled fur growing in ragged ashen patches. Protruding bones. Eyes should be bigger, like dinner plates. Its skull should be long, almost fish-like. That should do it. I pictured it closer, its chest sallow and its body wracked with muscles like tree limbs.

That, I thought, should do the job. The perfect character. A visual representation of insomnia. Now all I had to do was send it away, banish it forever. I pictured myself in my room, pointing at the door, ushering the cowardly creature out.

I wondered if it ate raw meat. Almost certainly, I thought. It would be a powerful creature. It had to be, it had to feed. It had to live, it had to survive. It had to hunt, to be able to track weakness. Perhaps, even, the mere thought of it could usher it forward, drawing it into existence itself. Pulled as if from nowhere, suddenly into being – just by the sheer thought of its existence. It had to be able to be dreamed into creation, I thought. It had to...

I noticed a weight beside me. The mattress dipped. I heard

it creak.

That was when I realised my mistake. My mind had betrayed me. Dreamed it into creation. I caught a smell of its breath, like rotting meat.

I kept my eyes shut, tight. Tighter. I felt it lean down lower over me. I thought to myself, if I could just dream it away, dream it away...

I opened my eyes. It was looking back at me.

It smiled.



## MY ROOMMATE'S LOCKS HYPETAPH

He told me his name a lot. I specifically remember asking, more than once, but I don't remember it. I remember a few of things about him, but not his name, or his eye color—I do recall that he had one tooth missing, that he had splotchy gray-and-brown fur, and that this was because he was a mixed breed. He lost things often, small things, things like toothbrushes and lighters, socks. I don't remember his breed—did I ever ask?—but I don't think he knew either: his mom never told him.

She did tell him that he was a mistake though. I remember that. I remember he cried about it a lot. She told him that like eight years ago. I think that's where a lot of the trouble started.

He got the lock after I heard him crying one night. I walked in to see if he was alright, y'know? He wanted his privacy, yelled, kicked me out—the next day, bought a lock. A few days later, it was gone, and we got into a huge fight about it. He bought another lock, and it was gone the same day; he beat the shit out of me that night and bought another lock. I stayed with my girlfriend that evening. This was actually a good thing. The next morning he saw how the lock disappeared, even though I'd been gone the entire time.

He stopped buying 'em.

He'd always had a knack for losing things, but seeing this happen with the locks kinda changed things, y'know? When he borrowed stuff from me, I always assumed he was being really considerate for putting them back. Now I wonder if they just...left him. I should have asked. I bet he thinks I was an asshole and just took them back after a while.

The locks were the first time the two of us actively saw anything like this. Now I wonder if his penchant for losing things was *actually* him losing things. The weirdest part was when he killed himself. That's when we really got insight.

I walked into his room after not hearing from him, and there he was, hanging from the ceiling. There was his fur scattered on the floor, his jeans were wet and tail matted from where he had shit himself (dude, it was awful), and like any reasonable college kid I fuckin' panicked and left for a while. I didn't know what to do. I really didn't. I should have called the cops or something, but I wasn't thinking properly. In hindsight, I really, *really* wish I had, so someone else would've been there to see him when he sauntered into the living room later that same day.

He knew he'd killed himself, and, when I asked him, he said it was like "waking up from a dream you don't remember." He just woke up lying on the ground, the rope was simply...gone. This was how we learned things weren't just disappearing: they were regressing. Stuff he got didn't vanish into thin air, it, it...it fuckin' rewound—that's the easiest way to put it. The rope he used erased itself from his ownership; if it was never his, he never could have killed himself. I bet if we went to the hardware store that the locks would be back on the shelves.

He killed himself a lot. Used knives, pills. I cleaned the blood a lot for a while, but stopped after maybe the second time since the carpet just *unstained* itself when he did it. We learned this way that it didn't have to be his stuff specifically: he used one of my knives to slit his throat open, and nine

hours later it was back in the cupboard. I had to piss in the sink because he'd locked himself in the bathroom to do it. Turns out it didn't matter if the stuff was his or not, but I never learned completely what the criteria was for things to "revert." If they offered him autonomy? That's my greatest guess.

Man...what must it be like having a life where the life itself is refusing you control of it...

I'm not sure if he ever succeeded. After a while, everything was as normal as it could be. Things went missing or rewound or whatever, but he stopped blaming me for it, and I stopped asking questions.

I moved out a few months later. I don't know what he did.

I actually found a box of his books when I was unpacking—snagged 'em by accident—but I couldn't find his number in my phone. I called the complex to see if he was still there after a while, but the landlady said she had no record of that apartment being leased out. When I couldn't remember his name, she hung up on me. That's fair, honestly; I sounded like a total scam.

Sometimes, I wonder if I moved out, or if I was just another thing being made to undo itself from his life.

RED VELVET  
GEORGE SQUARES

I used to hate Spring for the new set of antlers they brought me. I was thirteen when my first rack came in at the end of May at a 4H camp. Lyle, my best friend at the time, thought I had fell and hurt myself because we both smelled the blood. I could feel the bumps against the keratin of my digits and there was split skin. When we went to the first aid tent I had a migraine and started to cry, thinking I was going to die while my friend sputtered about dialing 911. When the nurse saw what was wrong, she started laughing at both of us, told me to calm down, and gave me some aspirin.

Within a couple of days though, things changed. I had about a foot of new weight on top of my head that I hadn't had before. The nurse wasn't laughing anymore, because according to her (which I now understand, but didn't at the time), it was supposed to take a couple of months for my first antlers to get this size. She said the red was a normal thing called velvet, but it just looked like blood to me, and that's what everybody else said it looked like too. That's also how it smelled. The nurse wrapped it all in blue gauze, handed me some more over the counter medication, and sent me to bed.

When I called my mom and asked her if I could go home, she told me that I would have to wait it out because she was still out of the country. Everything hurt for a while. Lyle said my new antlers looked like the plumbing under his sink and

stopped talking to me, which hurt me a lot at the time but I got over it years later. I hated those antlers so much that I wanted to saw them off or run into the woods and smash them into a tree until they'd break off, so I decided to pack my flashlight, my medicine, and my gauze into my bag and left my cabin in the middle of the night.

I thought it would be stupid to follow the trail because I might run into a patrol counselor or somebody might see me from a window, so I picked a spot in the mountain path that looked like it had a few good jutting crags to climb down. I landed in a densely wooded thicket. The air was humid and the canopy of trees overhead blotted out the stars.

Eventually I came upon a large cleft in the mountainside that had a rock tunnel resembling more of an alleyway between two large buildings and went about twenty paces in. The ground beneath me was littered with straw and bones, like the den of a wild animal or something. I was about to ram those awful horns against the wall, bearing the pain, when I heard whispers, like a conversation, at the end of the tunnel. There was a slow, subtle carving noise too like rock against rock, and a sudden clatter of hollow scattering as if somebody had fallen. I wanted to call out to ask if they were okay, but I also didn't want to get in trouble if it was some caver and they found me and they took me back the camp. So I left as quietly as I could.

That's when I heard whispers above me, like they were coming from the cliff spaces that were just out of sight. So, I walked faster, scattering cave litter, and for some reason I felt exposed at the mouth of the cleft. There was an instinctual feeling like there were hundreds of eyes in the dense woods staring at me that I couldn't see. I froze, feeling my heart in my chest and the tension in my shoulders as I clenched my teeth. I was too scared to move. After a solid ten minutes of silent tears rolling down my cheeks, I made a break for it, expecting all hell to break loose from my scramble back into

the woods in the direction of the path I had come from.

Running through the woods with antlers was difficult. Tree limbs scraped against them and I could hear the crunch of bark and the force of my impact against thick limbs I couldn't quite see in the dark. Warm liquid dripped down my brow.

I heard those same unfamiliar whispers again. What sounded at first like a conversation now sounded like a mantra coming from one source. The voice was all mumbles... almost gummy. Then there a scuttling sound... like many limbs clawing against the canopy, splintering wood and crashing through the leaves in my direction from a few yards behind and above me. I picked up my pace again, trying not to yell, clambering over a tree stump as my hiking boots splashed into muck.

I clambered up the rock wall ahead, urging myself upwards and pleading with somebody, anybody that I'd be fast enough to get to the top without something big and horrible grabbing onto my shoulders and dragging me down to the forest floor.

But that never happened, and it wasn't long until I found the path back to camp. I ran into my cabin and slammed the door behind me, no longer caring who I woke up. Another counselor turned on the light and more than a few of the other campers roused, groggy, grumpy and confused.

I tried to come up with a reasonable excuse, like I had gone to the bathroom and had been chased by a hive of wasps, but the counselor was hearing none of it. She seemed more concerned than angry.

She said "Roger... where are your antlers?" Then she tilted her head and covered her mouth with a hand. "You're covered in blood!"

My antlers grew back the next spring, but never that fast. At that time when I was taken to the hospital, the doctor said the bone was cut perfectly.







## BIOGRAPHIES

T. THOMAS ABERNATHY is an artist and graphic designer located in Lansing, Michigan.

KIRISIS “KC” ALPINUS is a passionate and deeply sensitive writer who can usually be found with her nose buried within a book. A verifiable goofball and jack-of-all-trades, most of her current free time is spent harvesting the most premium of memes or seeking out the nearest village to conquer in her never-ending quest for mead. She can be found between the warm, sandy beaches of the Gulf and the snow-capped Rocky Mountains, where she lives with her loving boyfriend, Ocean Tigrox, (who keeps her on her toes and sometimes shares his warm sunbeams with.)

She is the editor for the Coyotl Award-winning CLAW: Volume:1, Thrill of the Hunt, Species: Wildcats and Breeds: Wildcats. Some of her written works can be found in the Coyotl Award-winning Inhuman Acts, Leo Award-winning ROAR 9 from Furplanet and Infurno from Thurston Howl Publications; the upcoming A Sword Master’s Tale from Armoured Fox Press; and the upcoming Hot Dish, Volume 3 from Sofawolf Press. Find her at @Darheddol or @Swirlytales on Twitter. Embrace dholz, drink mead!

STACY BENDER is a Cincinnati author with several novels to her name. She’s also written several short stories, including a few for the FurReality convention books.

ALICE CLAWFORD, a writer from the United Kingdom. Growing up a nerd, she loves playing video games and watching videos about said video games. She’s involved in several table top RPG’s, such as Pathfinder and D&D.

ALISON “CYBERA” CYBE is a Bram Stoker Award nominated author who specialises in fantasy and horror fiction. They are the manager of the gaming website CybesWebsite.com in which they write articles, editorials and reviews. Their first published work, a collection of short psychological horror stories, enjoyed a brief stint on the bestseller charts and was soon joined by many others, and their previous work has been featured in several horror and sci-fi/fantasy publications including *Dark Cities*, *Interzone* and *Phantasmagoria*. They work as a freelance writer for companies including tabletop RPG publishers Cubicle 7 and Green Ronin Publishing, and has written extensively on inclusion and positive representation within the gaming community, and has contributed short fiction to multiple gaming publications.

Their recent published works includes a series of LGBTQ+ comedy novels, along with works for Thurston Howl Publications including editing “Trans-fur-mation”, a collection of stories focused on trans voices in the community. They currently pen a short transhumanism thriller series which enjoys weekly chapter-by-chapter online publication. They were born in Scotland and live in England, and is a co-manager of a large gaming club. Their interests include celtic mythology, transhumanism, garage kits and pet rats, and they have a degree in Film & Media. They are non-binary and their pronouns are they/them and favourite colour is green. You can catch them on most social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook and FurAffinity as CyberaWolf.

NATHANIAL “LECOUNT” EDWARDS is a 24 year old free-lance writer who creates primarily horror. His work has previously been featured in two of the “Werewolves Versus” Anthologies as well as “Slashers”. He spent two years at Vanderbilt pursuing a bachelors in English before leaving due to illness. He currently lives in rural Tennessee and his hobbies include

baking, spending too much time playing video games, and spending far far too much of that time playing bad, free indie horror games he finds on the internet.

CEILIDH NEWBURY is an Australian writer based in Melbourne. She has a background in technical theatre and is currently studying her master's in creative writing. When she's not studying or writing, she can be found lounging on the couch with her cat, drinking tea and dreaming up new characters for tabletop RPGs.

GEORGE SQUARES is a speculative fiction writer of horror, drama and erotica. He has an undergraduate degree in Biology and is working on his postgraduate degree in Education. He lives in Virginia with his husband.

JAMES STONE is the pen name of Syr Otter. He discovered his love of furies in 2001, and first tried his hand at writing stories in furry worlds in 2011. SciFi and Horror have been favorites of his since his brother let him watch "Alien" and "The Thing" one night as a kid when his parents were away. His work has appeared in "Bleak Horizons" by Furplanet. He can be found at @jamesstoneraven and @syrotter on twitter.

THURSTON HOWL is the editor-in-chief of Thurston Howl Publications, acquisitions editor for Sinister Stoat Press, founder of the Furry Book Review program and the Leo Literary Awards, and a coffee and sex addict. His book *Straight Men* was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award and an ALAA Over the Rainbow Award.

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