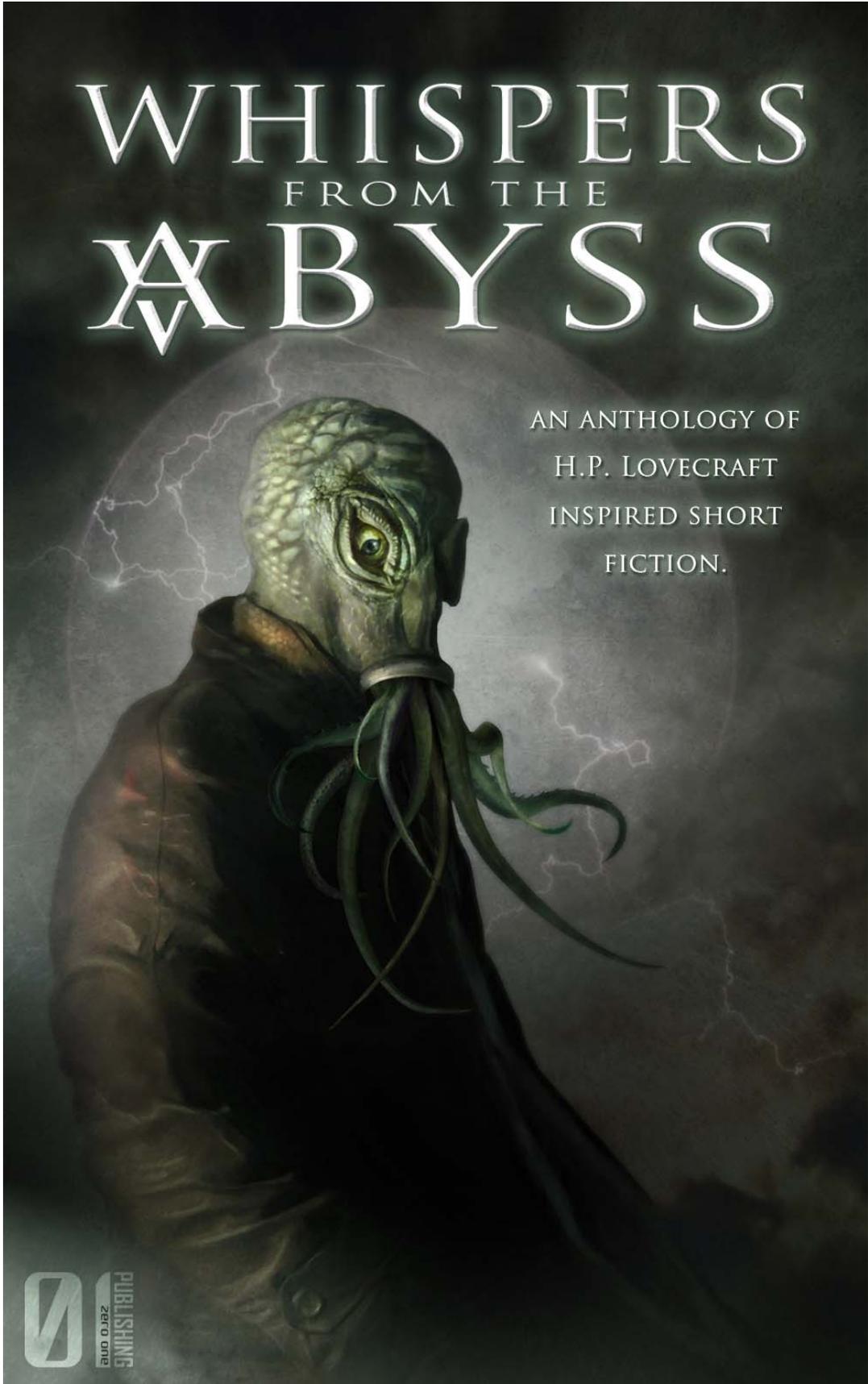


WHISPERS FROM THE ABYSS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF
H.P. LOVECRAFT
INSPIRED SHORT
FICTION.

A green, tentacle-headed creature with a large, yellow eye and a mouth full of tentacles, wearing a dark, heavy coat. The creature is set against a dark, stormy background with lightning bolts. The overall mood is mysterious and ominous.

 PUBLISHING
Zero One

WHISPERS FROM THE ABYSS

A collection of H.P. Lovecraft inspired short fiction.

Edited by Kat Rocha



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION :: By Alasdair Stuart

IDEN-INSHI :: By Greg Stolze

PUSHING BACK :: By JC Hemphill

NATION OF DISEASE: The Rise & Fall of a Canadian Legend :: By Jonathan Sharp

WHEN WE CHANGE :: By Mason Ian Bundschuh

NUTMEAT :: By Martin Hill Ortiz

THE LAST TWEET :: By Charles Black

SECRETS IN STORAGE :: By Tim Pratt & Greg van Eekhout

THE WELL :: By Tim Jeffreys

THE NEON MORGUE :: By Nathan Wunner

THE DEEP :: By Corissa Baker

FEAR AND LOATHING IN INNSMOUTH: Richard Nixon's Revenge :: By Jason Andrew

MY FRIEND FISHFINGER BY DAISY, AGE 7 :: By David Tallerman

CHASING SUNSET :: By A.C. Wise

THE THING WITH ONYX EYES :: By Stephen Brown

I DO THE WORK OF THE BONE QUEEN :: By John R. Fultz

SUCK IT UP, GET IT DONE :: By Brandon Barrows

THE SUBSTANCE IN THE SOUND :: By W.B. Stickel

STONE CITY, OLD AS IMMEASURABLE TIME :: By Kelda Crich

HIDEOUS INTERVIEW WITH BRIEF MAN :: By Nick Mamatas

THE SEA, LIKE GLASS UNBROKEN :: By Silvia Moreno-Garcia

THE DECORATIVE WATER FEATURE OF NAMELESS DREAD :: By James Brogden

HENRY :: By Lance Axt

MY STALK :: By Aaron J. French

GIVE ME THAT OLD TIME RELIGION :: By Lee Finney

AFRAID OF DOBERMANS :: By Chad Fifer

LEVIATHAN :: By Nicholas Almand

HORRORSCOPE :: By Charles Black

THE JAR OF ATEN-HOR :: By Kat Rocha

THE FLOOR :: By Jeff Provine

WAITING :: By Dennis Detwiller

OTHER PEOPLE'S HOUSES :: By Sarena Ulibarri

YOU WILL NEVER BE THE SAME :: By Erica Satifka

DEATH WORE GREASEPAINT :: By Josh Finney

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This book is a work of fiction. All characters, names, and events portrayed are fictional or are used in an imaginary manner to entertain. Any resemblance to any real persons or dead is purely intentional for the purposes of satire.

WHISPERS FROM THE ABYSS, A COLLECTION OF H.P. LOVECRAFT
INSPIRED SHORT FICTION.

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INTRODUCTION

By Alasdair Stuart

There's a quote, one of the dozens I collect every year. I partially blame Criminal Minds, and the simple, and brilliant conceit of opening and closing an episode with an appropriate quote. I partially blame my Dad who's been an inveterate people watcher and collector of bon mots, aphorisms, witticisms and words what people speak good for years.

Mostly though I blame my writer brain. I'm a sucker for a good quote, a well turned one liner and there are certain writers I will cross the street for. At speed. One is Aaron Sorkin, another is David Mamet who was once memorably described as writing simultaneously exactly like, and nothing at all like, how people speak.

Then there's William Friedkin. I don't know much of Friedkin's work but I do know this, a quote which I've carried with me since childhood, long before I hosted a horror podcast. Long, even before I admitted to myself that much like CM Punk is (or was, things do move fast in pro wrestling) a Paul Heyman guy, I am a horror guy.

'True horror is seeing something approach'.

Bingo. Right between the eyes. That is the most perfect summation of why I love horror I have ever read and believe me I've read plenty. That creeping suggestion, the moment the air drops, the ambient noise falls away. The moment you realize everyone's looking at you. Crime fiction calls it the moment before the bullet hits the bone.

That's where horror lives, the second before something becomes. These stories, all short, all focused and all perfect, embody that second and explore it from every single angle. 'Other People's Houses' by Sarena Ulibarri folds something else in there too. She shows us the moment our story intersects with something older and darker. I love that moment too, 'The Zeppo' may be my all time favourite Buffy episode. But then she does something even cleverer, showing us that sometimes horror transforms not just ourselves but our outlook. Sometimes that transformation is positive. Or is that just what we're told to think?

'My Friend Fishfinger by Daisy, Age 7' by David Tallerman takes the same tack. There's some truly sweet about the idea of the friendship at the centre of this piece. The fact it's cut through with horror like salt water through fresh only makes everything snap into even sharper relief. This is a story about an innocent, and whilst it's easy to imagine the innocence is so powerful it will overcome what's waiting for it, we don't see that happen.

We just see it approach.

Friedkin. Clever bastard, huh?

'Stone City, Old As Immeasurable Time' by Kelda Crich takes that idea, of the innocent in the house of evil, and turns it on its head. Here, horror has approached, destroyed and left. What's left is nothing but determination and the flat, wide plain of a life made empty. There's something immensely empowering in that desolation, in that freedom to do whatever you need to do to survive. There's something awful too. Do what thou wilt may be the whole of the law, but that doesn't mean it's a get out of jail free card.

Just three stories in a book full of them. All about that moment I love, the moment where something approaches. The moment where you close your eyes and hope it goes away.

It will. But there'll be another story right behind it. And another. And another.

Open your eyes. Look. Because true horror is seeing something approach. And true horror is here.

IDEN-INSHI

By Greg Stolze

12/17/11

I deserve a Nobel Prize in biology and instead I'm writing a diary on toilet paper and hiding it in my bra. I blame sexism and racism. And America's retarded attitudes towards science, but that's rooted in sexism and racism too. If someone told those Tea Party *blancos* "as soon as we perfect cloning, women will no longer monopolize the power to carry babies," they'd probably make it a national priority. Or they'd realize it would get women out of the kitchen and thinking too much.

Still, no matter how lousy the USA is, I'd rather be picking beans in Arizona beside *tío* Hector than locked up here. "Here," I'm pretty sure, is North Korea.

12/18/11

The guards almost look Huichol but didn't react when I called them "*babosos*" or "shit-eaters," so I figure they don't speak Spanish or English. Military uniforms. Could be Chinese, I guess, but my money's still on North Korea. If I could get at my money, which I can't.

On the bright side, when that Sinaloa Capo's clone conks out, it'll be hard for his gunmen to punish me. I mean, I told him it was an unstable process, look at Dolly the sheep and its defects, every human illegally cloned since 1998 died before the age of 12, but no. He was determined to have a young body to transplant his brain into by 2028.

When that guy with the nurse-shoes put a bag over my head in a ladies' room in Portugal, I was pretty sure the *pandilla* had come for me, in fact. But I woke up on a ship and now I'm in a building with no windows and a lot of lab equipment. Lab equipment with tags in that alphabet that looks like circuit diagrams.

I wonder how Kim Jong Un heard about me. There aren't a lot of biogeneticists willing to stand up and say "Clones aren't crimes against god, they're just retroactive twins, calm DOWN Rick Santorum!" And to be fair, I never did say that. I just went ahead.

It says something very dark about our morality that the only people sensible enough to pursue human cloning are narco-billionaires and tinpot tyrants.

12/20/11

They've provided me with frozen tissues, along with all the fertile eggs I could want. I guess your average North Korean teen girl would happily trade her menstrual goodies for an extra bowl of rice. My employer will probably be spoiled for choice when it comes to surrogate *mamacitas* as well. None of that changes the tissues into gametes, though. Cloning from live, fresh sperm is hard enough. Frozen tissue sections? I'm good, but the greatest chef in the world can't even make a burrito without any ingredients.

12/25/11

Feliz Navidad. They got me a very nice *rosca de reyes*.

12/30/11

Attempted DNA insertion. Failed to subdivide. But I found out that the guy who kidnapped me is the big boss here. His name's Dae-Hyun.

1/6/12

Happy New Year. Insertion failed.

1/16/12

DNA subdivided, but with numerous transcription errors. Clone Jong Il there would be lucky to be born with an asshole for a nose. Still, it's a start. I'm having some successes with a protein bath to revitalize material before insertion. If I can find the right enzyme, I think it might let it subdivide cleanly. But there's still the issue of decay-gaps. If this was *Jurassic Park* I'd fill them in with frog DNA, and we'd wind up with a HERMAPHRODITE revived authoritarian dictator.

1/21/12

DNA subdivided and they insisted I implant it. Specifically, some guy named 'Petrov.' His English is decent, said he'd take full responsibility. Wants me to

perform the insertion on a couple dozen ova, says we'll try to implant the best 5-6. With an adequate rate of implantation, that could give us 2-3 deformed dictator clones dying before puberty.

1/27/12

11 out of 30 attempted insertions were successful, 4 of them looked like they just might be viable, one was pretty good. We're starting the implantations tomorrow.

2/2/12

All 5 failed to implant.

2/14/12

Happy Valentine's Day. I winked at one of the guards. He ignored me.

2/26/12

Another month, another batch of ruined genetic material. 23 of 40 DNA insertions worked, 14 of 23 subdivided (which is a **SPLENDID** conversion rate, if you ask me), 4 lacked all but minor errors but all 4 failed to implant. Petrov insisted on trying the other 10. None implanted.

3/1/12

Petrov is gone, replaced by a Japanese guy. His name's Kiro something, his English pronunciation is *basura*. We're trying a 'new approach.' He did say some nice things about my work, I think. He's so stone-faced it's impossible to tell if he means it.

3/3/12

Kiro brought the most marvelous stuff! I have no idea where he got it—it's like nothing I've ever seen, DNA configured like drill bits instead of double-helices. It can't be artificial, it's decades beyond Stanford and Rockefeller combined. But it doesn't resemble anything from nature either. Did it crash to Earth in a meteorite? Did they find it in some deep-sea trench? Wherever, it's damn near miraculous. It's like human DNA is a computer from 1978 and this stuff's a brand-new Android

phone. Kiro calls it “*iden-inshi*.” I don’t care if it’s Jesus Christ’s jism, this is going to be like upgrading to steel tools after banging rocks together.

3/17/12

It’s like a dream. The *iden-inshi* conforms to transposable elements, almost like a pattern-matching algorithm. The possibilities are staggering, not just for fiddly shit like curing *spina bifida* but for fundamental life-building and hybridization. The source material is a lot more robust now that I’ve been able to re-attach lossy elements. A 100% insertion rate seems perfectly possible.

3/29/12

29 of 30 insertions successfully subdividing! None of them seem damaged, but... it’s possible that exposure to *iden-inshi* has changed them. If they’re viable changes, they wouldn’t show up until implantation, or even gestation. Possibly something like a late-onset genetic syndrome, imperceptible until the clones were in their thirties. By then, I’ll have my reward and be retired in Rio. Or dead in a shallow grave in the DMZ. Or still be in some gilded cage, working on immortality elixirs for Kim Jong Un who, I’m sorry, looks like the bottom rung of the ‘genetic desirability’ ladder.

4/4/12

100% subdivision! Now to see what happens with implantation.

4/9/12

Everything’s different.

They beat me. Kiro too. Kiro looks like they used rifle butts, his bruises are all the same shape. Me, it was just fists and boots.

We were in rooms before, little suites like a hotel. Now there’s no pretense that we’re anything but prisoners. No bars on the windows, because there aren’t windows. They bring us food on trays like they used to, still the same food, but they beat us so badly. I was curled up on my knees with my hands over the back of my neck. There’s a rough horseshoe of deep, purple-green bruises all up the side of one thigh, across my ass and then down to the other knee. I’m lucky they didn’t just break my spine, it was totally exposed. It hurts to pee, to breathe, to sit down. Then they showed us the videos why.