

"THE INTRIGUING VAMPIRES APPEARING IN
EVOLVE ALL SHARE A COMMON LINK TO THE
ICONIC CHARACTER DRACULA." — DACRE STOKER

VAMPIRE STORIES OF THE NEW UNDEAD

evolve

EDITED BY

NANCY
KILPATRICK



evolve

Vampire Stories of
the New Undead

edited by

Nancy Kilpatrick



EDGE SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY PUBLISHING

AN IMPRINT OF HADES PUBLICATIONS, INC.

CALGARY



Copyright © 2010

All individual contributions copyright
by their respective authors

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.



Edge Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing
An Imprint of Hades Publications Inc.
P.O. Box 1714, Calgary, Alberta, T2P 2L7, Canada

Interior design by Brian Hades
Cover Illustration by John Kaiine
Evolve logo by Rynne Hamilton
ISBN-13: 978-1-894063-33-3

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without written permission. Please do not participate in or encourage piracy of copyrighted materials in violation of the author's rights. Purchase only authorized editions.

EDGE Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing and Hades Publications, Inc. acknowledges the ongoing support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts for our publishing programme.



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada

FIRST EDITION

(m-20091209)

Printed in Canada

www.edgewebsite.com

Bram Stoker, my great grand uncle, spent seven years, 1890-1897 researching and writing his classic story *Dracula*. During those years, he was the personal secretary to Henry Irving and manager of Irving's Lyceum Theater in London. The Lyceum Company toured North America on two occasions, including stops in Montreal and Toronto. Some years later, Bram's brother Richard retired to B.C. and their nephew, my grandfather, relocated to Montreal.

Many traits of Bram's Count Dracula are now accepted as standard vampire characteristics, integral to the genre today. It is worth mentioning that Bram Stoker did not invent the characteristics, but rather gathered the attributes for his Count from earlier vampire fiction, folklore, and mythologies.

The intriguing vampires appearing in *evolve* all share a common link to the iconic character Dracula, which can be traced back to those special pages of Bram's notes for Dracula, housed in the Rosenbach Museum.

Dacre Stoker
Great grandnephew of Bram Stoker
Canadian Co-Author of *Dracula: The Un-Dead*



Contents

Introduction	
Nancy Kilpatrick	1
Let the Night In	
Sandra Kasturi	13
Learning Curve	
Kelley Armstrong	15
Chrysalis	
Ronald Hore	22
Mother of Miscreants	
Jennifer Greylyn	35
Resonance	
Mary E. Choo	47
The New Forty	
Rebecca Bradley	63
Red Blues	
Michael Skeet	72
The Drinker	
Victoria Fisher	81
Sleepless in Calgary	
Kevin Cockle	86
Come to Me	
Heather Clitheroe	101
An Ember Amongst the Fallen	
Colleen Anderson	109
Mamma's Boy	
Sandra Wickham	124
The Morning After	
Claude Bolduc (Translated by Sheryl Curtis)	128
All You Can Eat, All the Time	
Claude Lalumière	136



Alia's Angel	
Rhea Rose	149
When I'm Armouring My Belly	
Gemma Files	157
A Murder of Vampires	
Bev Vincent	169
The Greatest Trick	
Steve Vernon	184
Soulfinger	
Rio Youers	197
Bend to Beautiful	
Bradley Somer	214
Evolving	
Natasha Beaulieu	219
How Magnificent is the Universal Donor	
Jerome Stueart	229
The Sun Also Shines On the Wicked	
Kevin Nunn	249
Quid Pro Quo	
Tanya Huff	260
Biographies	275



evolve

Vampire Stories of
the New Undead





Acknowledgments

The editor would like to thank her dear friends and her partner Hugues Leblanc for consistently supporting her work, as they always do, despite her moods. The writers herein were nothing but generous with their stories and most gracious about accepting editorial feedback. John Kaiine's art, which graces the cover, is an amazingly lovely work which we were lucky to get. Brian Hades has once again gone above and beyond and everyone in Canada should be grateful that such a magnificent publisher exists, one willing to take risks—the man is open to working with people obsessed with vampires!



Introduction

By Nancy Kilpatrick

I began editing this anthology when I was eleven years old. That's when I first encountered Dracula.

It was a dark and stormy night in Philadelphia, and for some reason I was allowed by the Powers That Were to stay up and watch the Late Show on TV, which always aired the old black and white horror movies from the 1930s.

The Late Show was then called Shock Theater and hosted by Roland, aka The Cool Ghoul, who began his career in Philly and was so popular that a New York station scooped him up and took him away. These were BC days—before cable—and a major city might have three local TV stations, if it was lucky. Cities were always snatching popular figures and Roland moved to the Big Apple, leaving Philadelphia TV destined to settle for its fifteen-minutes-of-fame via American Bandstand.

Roland — real name John Zacherley — was vampiric. He possessed hollowed out cheeks, a wild and crazy stare, wore the requisite Count Dracula duds, and had ongoing eerie conversations with My Dear, who dwelt in the coffin center stage that he frequently bent over to catch her replies—and which only he could hear—or, alternately, yelled at his lab assistant Igor, a voiceless chain-rattler offstage. “Where’s Igor?” became a buzzphrase, printed on an oversized black and white button that I wish I still possessed!

During his terrifying tenure, Roland introduced many horror classics to an enthralled audience of mainly youth, of which I was one. I soon became a regular viewer, begging, wheedling, sneaking out to the old console TV

Let the Night In

By Sandra Kasturi

*Shut the night out or let it in,
it is a cat on the wrong side of the door
whichever side it is on. A black thing
with its implacable face.*

—P.K. Page, from “Autumn”

Let us go to the moon, he says.
Such a relief to stand on that always
darkened face, cratered imperfect
cousin, beautiful sphere flying
into the celestial darkness.
We tire of the earth-tides, the salt-pull
on your bodies. But these vampires—
they often talk like that, as if every
statement came from a tipped top hat
and poetic frock coat, a white-shirted gleam.
Shut the night out or let it in, you wonder.

Make your mind up, invite him in to stay,
or firm your heart and door
to closing. It’s hard—when no one
else has known you, and your house
is empty even when you are there.
But then comes this thing, this strangeness,
with his lack of breath, his words stolen
from centuries, the cool hands
that you have let slip inside
because you yourself have always been
a cat on the wrong side of the door.

Learning Curve

By Kelley Armstrong

"I'm being stalked."

Rudy, the bartender, stopped scowling at a nearly empty bottle of rye and peered around the dimly lit room.

"No, I wasn't followed inside," I said.

"Good, then get out before you are. I don't need that kind of trouble in here, Zoe."

I looked around at the patrons, most sitting alone at their tables, most passed out, most drooling.

"Looks to me like that's exactly the kind of trouble you need. Short of a fire, that's the only way you're getting those chairs back."

"The only chairs I want back are those ones." He hooked his thumb at a trio of college boys in the corner.

"Oh, but they're cute," I said. "Clean, well-groomed... and totally ruining the ambiance you work so hard to provide. Maybe I can sic my stalker on them."

"Don't even think about it."

"Oh, please. Why do you think I ducked in here? Anyone with the taste to stalk me is not going to set foot past the door."

He pointed to the exit. I leaned over the counter and snagged a beer bottle.

"Down payment on the job," I said, nodding to the boys. "Supernaturals?"

He rolled his eyes, as if to say, "What else?" True, Miller's didn't attract a lot of humans, but every so often one managed to find the place, though they usually didn't make it past a first glance inside.

Chrysalis

By Ronald Hore

The first rays of sunlight crept through the narrow shifting crack between the Venetian blinds and the sheer curtains, tracing a flickering picture against the wall. She opened one eye and watched as the breeze drifting in from the open window altered the image from a fluttering butterfly to something resembling a fading crucifix. In the distance a raven complained, the leaves in the neighbour's oak rustled, and then, downstairs, the sound of the front door opening. Father was home. She stretched, pulled the covers over her head, and groaned.

"Daylight already." Eyes closed, she checked off a mental calendar. "Damn, it's a school day."

She heard the scurrying on the stairs; that would be Mother rushing down in floppy slippers to make breakfast, and counted to ten.

Right on cue: "Lucy, are you awake? Time to get up!"

A normal mother would have called to her daughter from right outside the bedroom door, not waited until she was in the remote reaches of the kitchen, but then, Lucy doubted Minnie was all that normal. She flung feet first out of bed and rolled to stand, staring into the mirror perched at a dangerous tilt on her dresser. Critically she arched her eyebrows, puckered, made a face and examined her teeth. Definitely her best feature, she thought, now those baby teeth had been replaced.

"Lucy, breakfast!"

She shook her head, letting loose the rat's nest of coal-black strands that settled as they pleased around her thin face. Lucy squinted. Minnie always said she took after her

Mother of Miscreants

by Jennifer Greylyn

“Hello, Mother.”

She was not surprised to hear those words emerge from the mouth of a man who looked too young to be her son. Standing in front of her polished wooden table, flanked by a stand displaying many copies of her book on one side and a glossy blown-up poster of its cover on the other, he was tall and lithe, with a handsomely proportioned face and elegantly tousled hair. He seemed the very embodiment of youth, but he was more likely to be taken for her brother, perhaps even her older brother. The truth was quite different.

He’d joined the line after the initial crowd waiting for her had thinned. She’d noticed him right away even though he was dressed similarly to many other people. The goth tones of ebony and amethyst that he wore were popular among her fans, but few could afford the rich silk and lush velvet of his attire. Still, that wasn’t what made him stand out. A number of those in the bookstore were much more distinctive than him—the girl with piercings almost everywhere, the businessman in a tailored suit, the grey-haired couple in matching jogging outfits.

She saw him because she was looking for him or, rather, those like him. It was the main reason she held all her signings at night, midnight to be precise. She’d told her publisher, Ishtar House, that it would be a good marketing strategy and they believed she badly needed one because she refused to promote her book in more traditional ways. She wouldn’t make TV appearances or let herself be filmed or photographed. She insisted on meeting people in person.

Resonance

By Mary E. Choo

Peg stared through the peephole in the front door, watching as the local Health Officer retreated down the sidewalk and terraced steps to the street. When he started his car and eased it into the road, she let out a slow breath.

"He's gone," she said.

The slap of papers on the living room coffee table startled her. She turned to see Mark stuffing documents into his heavy briefcase.

"You're damn lucky he didn't raise other issues," he said. "If you'd control yourself and stop doing such stupid things, our group wouldn't have all these problems."

"So some of the neighbours don't like my feeding the wildlife!" Peg countered, stung. "So what? It's none of their damn business!"

"*Wildlife?* Come on, Peg! It was the rats that did it. You can't blame people for being upset! And you really don't want any kind of official nosing around here—they might start digging deeper—you're jeopardizing all of us!"

"The Health Officer didn't find any fault with the house—he just said to stop feeding the vermin!"

Peg saw the unfortunate glimmer of red that still lingered in Mark's eyes when he was really angry. She was well aware she'd gone too far. He snapped the locks on his briefcase shut, turning it over roughly on the table.

"Be careful!" Peg said. "The table's antique—Chinese—you'll ruin the finish!"

Mark ignored her. "It's all settled then, except for the casket. What would you like? Marble? Rosewood?"

The New Forty

By Rebecca Bradley

The simple truth is, they lack empathy. Soulless, self-absorbed, prowling the night for good times and quick fixes; nothing in their heads except sucking liquid down their throats and jumping on each other like apes in the zoo. Mindless, shameless. And the vampires are just as bad.

Oh, the young!

But I am not as bitter as I may sound. It is only that, after centuries of observation, I understand them a little too well. These days I observe them on talk shows, the youthful of both species, especially the undead. The rising stars of the new-epoch vampire movies, the super-models of vampire chic, vamp-rock bands with names like *Bloody Waters*, *Grateful Undead* and *Bled Zeppelin*. How perfect are their cold, shapely cadavers, and how beautifully they match the new tenor of the world. If ever there was an age when my kind could come from the shadows and *blend right in*, that time is now.

My kind? *Their* kind, rather. I have no kind. Even among vampires, I am a freak, a sport, an accident. A common slattern the first time around, spawned into a class and age where women did not give birth so much as whelp litters of unplanned annual brats, whose short lives and hacking deaths recapitulated those of their ancestors. Not mine, though. My father died when I was small, my mother when I was perhaps ten; whereas *I* survived two husbands and all seven of my own poor whelps, and plodded on dismal and solitary to the extraordinary age of sixty-four.

Then I became a witch, by definition, and through no true fault of mine. In those times, it was enough to be

Red Blues

By Michael Skeet

Your hand closes around the neck. Just for a second, you let your slender, grave-cold fingertips caress the gentle curve. Long since a stranger to the subtleties of tactile sensation, you nevertheless rejoice in the smoothness of the back of the neck, in its slender vulnerability. Then you press those fingers down, firmly but not too hard.

You begin to play.

Fingers flying over the strings of your vintage Gibson, you give them your twenty-seventh variation on the verse of "They Can't Take That Away From Me." It's your tenth night of a two-week gig in this club and the tenth time you've played this song they think they know. No one in the audience, though, has heard it the same way twice. You've memorized a lot of different versions of this song.

As Garrett and Holman join in for the chorus, you switch to variation one thousand eighteen. The two fit well together: their tempos match, and the flourish of sixteenth notes you've crammed into each bar of the chorus gives the impression of furious improvisation. After two choruses of this you head into the bridge, keeping the tempo but dropping back to an earlier variation on the tune, with more eighths than sixteenths and a couple of strategically placed discords to give the punters the impression of something new going on. Then it's back into the chorus—a different variation again—and as you head home you begin scouting the audience, looking to see if she's here tonight. It takes one more chorus until she drifts into view through the smoke and by then you've already caught her

The Drinker

By Victoria Fisher

I remember my first.

I was poor, unemployed and desperate. I had a basement apartment with rusting plumbing that dripped noisily into a bucket. Somehow along the way I'd left most of my friends behind and counted my greasy landlady among those I still had.

I'd taken to going to bars. I didn't drink much—never liked alcohol, never had the money—but I'd sit at the bar, my hand resting on a glass of whatever was cheap. I'd watch the people come and go and came to recognize the regulars and know their life stories and sorrows without counting myself among them. Nobody took much notice of me and I was okay with that. I hated everyone for their successes, and hated myself for failings.

She wasn't a regular. She was in her thirties, too old and well-dressed for the usual crowd, her black hair cut too severely for her round face and soft features. She sat beside me at the bar without ordering anything. She sat there for a long while without speaking at all.

I watched her out of the corner of my eye. There was something odd about her skin: her round cheeks seemed grey and matte instead of pink and shiny. She'd put on blush to hide it, but so close to her I could see her pallid colour. She wasn't wearing lipstick and her lips were as ashy as her face.

The barmen didn't bother her, although she wasn't ordering. She sat silently watching the people, like me.

"Fuckers." I don't know what made me say it.

Sleepless in Calgary

By Kevin Cockle

"I'll be damned," the vampire said. "You *do* see me."

David didn't know what to say. Looking up from his seat on the side-bench facing the rear exit-door of the Calgary Transit bus, he felt like he might pass out. Back at the last stop, as the bus was pulling away, he could have sworn he'd seen a man coalesce out of a sudden swirl of blowing snow and what looked to be tendrils of fog. Could have been the pattern of white snow against the dark brick backdrop at first—suggesting an outline in the way of an optical illusion. But then the illusion had smiled, revealing its vicious, trademark incisors, and returned David's gaze with a mix of surprise and delight.

The vampire regarded him now with a slight frown, right hand securing the overhead bar for balance as the filled-to-bursting bus lurched its way forward on rutted winter streets. The creature was pale, appearing to be a man in his early thirties, long-faced, not quite gaunt, but certainly lanky. He was dressed in a good wool long-coat—black—with black dress trousers and white sneakers for sensible traction on the treacherous city sidewalks. His cerulean eyes seemed set in a permanent scowl, blazing as though just on the edge of true fury, but his aspect was more curious now than threatening. He ran his left hand through long, wiry black locks, considering David as one might stare at a Rubik's cube, as though staring alone could solve the problem.

Come to Me

By Heather Clitheroe

The thought comes to her so suddenly one day that it's painful even to think it. But gradually, she comes back to it, turning the thought over in her mind and gently probing it, as one might touch an aching tooth. Tentatively, carefully. Half expecting it to hurt, yet shocked at the white hot flash that lances through everything. Even good intentions.

I am going to walk into the forest, Jane thinks. And never come out. The voice is, at the same time, not her own and only her own. She does not know where it has come from. Only that it is there, in her mind, and she cannot forget.

It's simple to say these words to herself, simple to feel them just below the surface of the monologues that run through the days. *Running out of orange juice. That man smells bad. I miss Vauxhall. I want to walk into the forest and never come out.* And she stops, startled and surprised, jarred out of complacency and half-stunned by the force of it. *That's a stupid thing to think. That's just stupid.*

It returns to her, again and again, and she finds herself saying the words to herself as she walks from her apartment to the little office where she works during the day. *I am. Going. To walk into. The forest. And never. Come out.* The words flutter against her consciousness in time to the click of her heels on the sidewalk, and she tucks her head down, blinking her eyes furiously. *Never come out. Never come out. Never come out.*

She leaves for work early in the mornings, before the neighbours start to leave for their own jobs. Early in the morning, with the sun just rising, she can lengthen her stride and almost imagine she is back home instead of in

An Ember Amongst the Fallen

By Colleen Anderson

Shadows fluttered from the corners as Buer bit in just above the fine lines of the wrist and sucked. Only five swallows. No overindulgence before the dinner party, but that was much later. The blonde male, lightly haired and slim, twitched but held still, his blood warm and slightly tart. Buer avoided the bull's stare and looked around the pen at the other beasts. He liked to keep the cattle clean and ready to drink at any point.

Some liked the taste better when the cattle fought but Buer found it made the blood acrid, sour upon the tongue and sometimes it stung going down. He preferred them docile, easy to subdue. The *Book of the Fallen* expressly forbade cruelty to or treating cattle as more than the meat and blood for which they were bred. Unpredictable, they could turn suddenly. Yet, if it wasn't for their musky smell and the rhythmic thump of their speedy hearts, they could almost pass as vampirii. It was their gazes that bothered Buer most.

He shuddered and licked the wound to help it close, then dropped the arm, smelling the tang of oniony sweat. He checked the other stock in the wood planked enclosure, the skylight now closed. The cattle liked sunlight and earthen tones and it was the one area of his condo that was not sleek metallic with black and blue accents. A plump white female steeped with red wine; every half hour a cup of pinot dripped into her bowl. A slimmer male paced in front of his white wine bowl. Buer pulled the list from his

Mamma's Boy

By Sandra Wickham

"Get back," she said, one hand on her swollen belly, the other holding the dinner knife in front of her.

He smiled, the same smile he had used to win her heart many years ago. The same smile she knew now to be an illusion.

"Ruthie," he said, hands outstretched in a gesture of peace, "you really are amazing. That is why I picked you."

Sweat soaked her forehead and ran under her arms as labour pains shot through her like lightning bolts. She stumbled slightly and fought to take deep, slow breaths. She raised the knife higher as he continued to approach. She had to stop this child from being born.

"I said stay back, Christopher." Christopher was not its real name, only part of the human façade she had fallen for. She had been fooled all through their courtship at university, a three year marriage and the first eight months of her pregnancy. Then she woke up a prisoner here and he had revealed his true form.

He smiled again as she doubled over from another contraction.

"There is no point in fighting it, Ruthie. My son will be born with or without your co-operation."

As soon as she could straighten up, she grabbed the knife with both hands and turned the tip of the blade towards her belly. It might only be a table knife but she hoped with enough force she could kill herself, the baby or both. Christopher laughed again but stopped moving forward.

The Morning After

By Claude Bolduc

Translated by Sheryl Curtis

It was so hard, so very hard, to get up from where she lay in the dark. The anguish of looking for something familiar that can't be found, the sense of oppression as your body fights the stiffness that holds it in a vice.

It takes so much willpower, so very much willpower to stand up, while the haze of sleep continues to swirl, carrying with it shards of thoughts and ghosts of confused memories. Deep within her mind, an immense black hole sucks up all the light that exists.

As soon as she stands up, she knows something is not right.

All around, a shell of shadows swallows everything, absolutely everything, including the hands she waves in front of her face. She opens her eyelids as wide as she can. Her entire forehead creasing into her scalp, she feels that she has opened her eyelids too wide, that this is not usual. She closes them immediately. Fingers touching her eyes, she finds nothing but two thin curtains of skin.

There is a sidewalk beneath her feet. She decides to follow it, weeping as she walks, arms stretched out ahead of her like a zombie, bumping into obstacles, stumbling down off the curb every dozen steps or so. Silence everywhere. The silence envelopes her in the same way the darkness does, cutting her off from the world, like a nightmare. Suddenly, tenuous, lost in the distance, the sound of a car. The strident shriek of a police siren. *It's night, a*

All You Can Eat, All the Time

By Claude Lalumière

So, like, my hair is freshly dyed, as black as I can get it. All the clothes I'm wearing are black, too: scarf, leather coat (with a lacy bustier underneath), leather gloves, skirt, fishnets, and boots that go mid-calf. Then there's my skin. I mean, I'm, like, pretty pale to start with. But I smear white makeup all over my face and glam it up with white glitter. It makes my skin almost glow in the dark. Last touch: white eyeshadow, plus some black eyeliner and glossy blue lipstick. I am, like, stunning. Out of this world. Otherworldly.

I mean, really, it's time I got laid already. I'm in Montreal, for fuck's sake. Sin city of the East Coast, blah, blah, blah.

I mean, it's fucking great here. The nightlife. The music. The bars. The cute girls. The hot boys. The even hotter men. It's, like, all you can eat, all the time. But I haven't brought anyone home yet. And I haven't let anyone take me to their place, either. I mean, I'm no prude. In rural Manitoba, where I'm from, there's nothing to do except sex, even if, like, there's no selection to speak of. So you do it, because it's marginally better than not doing it.

But here it's overwhelming. Paralysing, in fact. With so much to choose from, how do you choose? Plus, the truth is, before tonight, I wasn't sure that I was ready. I mean, I'm not entirely sure even now, but enough is enough, you know? There's so much to take in, living in

Alia's Angel

By Rhea Rose

I tried to say no, as Alia tipped the dirty Dixie cup to my mouth. Some of the blood it contained ran down my face and into my ear, but most of it went into my mouth. I swallowed.

She kissed my face like she always did, licking off the runaway blood. *No, Alia, don't do that.* Many times I'd warned her not to touch the blood, but she always said she wanted to be like me.

Alia usually came here alone. This time I heard a voice I didn't recognize, a young boy's voice.

"What's that in her hand?" the boy asked her.

I tried to open my eyes and lift my head, but I could not. Until Alia arrived with the full cup, this was the longest I'd ever gone without the blood-drink. But even with her meagre offering, another hour would pass before my wretched condition would allow me to get up from the rough, dank floor boards I'd collapsed onto.

"Don't talk. She needs to rest," Alia said to her friend. She crawled over to me; her warm fingers gently pulled my own thin weak fingers away from the book I held.

Without the weight and comfort of the book, my spirit separated from my body and floated upward. My soul was accustomed to performing this manoeuvre while waiting for my body to recover from lack of drink. My disengaged spirit was stopped only by the silent, rusted fan hanging from the ceiling. From there I surveyed the room below. The two children sat beside my crooked body; their clear, soft voices sounded as if they spoke directly into my ear.

When I'm Armouring My Belly

By Gemma Files

Much later, he would recall the exact moment when he finally forgot his own name: Face-down on a bumpy mattress smelling of semen and Vick's, with Goran pushing and biting into him at once—dry drag and relentless ache, icy and burning in equal amounts, the full Isobel Gowdie daemon-lover treatment. Wasn't like it'd never happened before, and yet, *that* particular time...something broke, never to be repaired. He felt it run out of him like the blood itself, greedily lapped and savoured: Waste not, want not.

When they flipped him over, meanwhile, Cija came settling onto him from above like Fuseli's nightmare or Munch's red-headed whore-dream, her teeth almost meeting around the bed of one nipple—with him in too much nethermost pain even to fuck forward 'til she *made* him, reached back to dip her too-sharp thumbnail right into the seat of his deep, laid-open hurt and *pressed* inward. His hips bucked in a jerky frenzy, and she just laughed to see it; that same laugh they all had, a rippling silver-glass trill, delighted most by the spectacle of damage. Her insides milking him hard enough to bruise all the while, wet and tight and numbing-cold as a close-packed box of snow.

They gave him a bath that night, let the grime and blood soak off in rivulets, exposing all his wounds—healed and unhealed alike—to their careless exploration. Cija ran some sort of hotel shampoo-packet through his hair that smelled of sage and lemon, and exclaimed in surprise at the result:

A Murder of Vampires

by Bev Vincent

Strains of "Highway to Hell" brought Vic out of a deep slumber. One eye popped open, then the other. It took him a few seconds to realize where he was and what was happening. Glowing red digits swam into focus.

2:17.

Operating on instinct, he grabbed his cell phone from the nightstand, flipped it open, and pressed it against his ear, hoping he had it turned the right way around.

"Yeah," he said.

"We've got another one," the voice on the other end said. The man then delivered an address on Uniacke Street, which Vic repeated to confirm that it had registered.

"Right. Fifteen minutes." That was his stock reply, no matter how long it would take him to get to a location.

Olivia rolled over. Another night of disrupted sleep for them both. Why weren't more people murdered in the daytime? he wondered, then brushed the thought aside.

Olivia sat up and waited for him to lean over to be pecked on the cheek. "Sucks to be you," she said. He returned her kiss with a smile she would sense even if she couldn't see it in the dark. Yeah, sometimes it really does, he thought as he rolled out of bed and lurched toward the bathroom.

It was closer to half an hour before he reached his destination. Finding a place that served brewed tea in the middle of the night was getting harder all the time.

The Greatest Trick

By Steve Vernon

Let's get one thing straight.

We don't turn into bats.

Why in the world would we want to?

But, because they saw that trick in a movie, people believe it must be true.

That's just how it is.

People believe exactly what they expect to see and people's expectations must always be met. For example, if a man sits down to watch a Three Stooges movie, sooner or later he expects to see a two-finger poke in the eye.

He doesn't expect high art. He expects a poke in the eye. Anything else is a lie. Mind you, there are some of us who have raised the act of lying to a state of high art.

If you tell it right, a lie can be immortal.

And some of the most immortal lies in history began with those three magic words—"If I'm elected..."

Jessome invited me inside his office. He began our first meeting by informing me that he had a crucifix in his pocket and he wasn't afraid to use it.

Things went uphill from there.

"Nobody is going to vote for a vampire," Jessome said, after I explained what I wanted of him.

"They voted for Schwarzenegger," I pointed out. "And he married one."

"Shriver?"

"The cheekbones are a dead giveaway," I explained. "I thought you had a better eye than that."

Soulfinger

By Rio Youers

"He plays the blues."

"Yes he does. Better than anyone."

"So why is he called Soulfinger?"

"You want the quick answer, or the not-so-quick answer?"

"The quick answer."

"Because when he plays, he touches your soul."

"Cute, but is he really that good?"

"No. Whatever you have in your mind, however you determine what is good—it might be fine wine or the memory of your first true love—take that and multiply it by a number you can't imagine. Only then will you be anywhere close to what Soulfinger can do. He is the moon, brother. He is the ocean. The sky can rain fire and the mountains can fall, but Soulfinger will always be playing the blues."

The bar was called The Smokestack—a rumbling blues joint on Whispering Avenue. Blacked-out windows and heartache on the walls. The doors didn't open until ten P.M., and they opened on a long room that was tapered at the far end, like the world's biggest coffin. The air tasted of cigarette smoke and sweat, heavy with woe, something that could tip a scale.

"What time does he go on stage?"

"When he's ready. Soulfinger doesn't concern himself with hours and minutes, with clocks..." The bartender ticked off seconds with his index finger: *tick-tock-tick*. "He has his own agenda."

Bend to Beautiful

By Bradley Somer

I sit on a wire stool and beside me is my companion in this foetal hour. He is an angel in the flesh, or so I thought upon first glance when I saw him in the soft glow of the wall lamp, standing near a scar carved into the drywall. Twenty-five years old, if I had to guess an age. He had a sad face, the half that wasn't in shadow anyway, that didn't belong in that underground space. A glass full of amber clutched in his long fingers, his knuckles bulged at the joints where fine bones met, and all I felt was hunger.

I bought him a drink. I talked to him, me eager and intrusive, him reserved and quiet. I invited him back to my apartment, my pulse pounding for fear he wouldn't be with me. Without consideration, he asked for a glass of wine, accepting my company for the evening.

My own angel followed silently from the taxi to an elevator that lifted us to the top of the building. My own angel in my apartment, twenty-eight stories above the dark, early morning street noise. It seemed like an inadequate cage for him, seemed too close to the ugly asphalt and concrete of the city.

With a glass of wine at hand, he sat down, hunched his shoulders and leaned on the counter, fiddling with a lighter like there was something he wanted to tell me. His chestnut hair, cropped short, hugged the arc of his skull. His skin was smooth, which betrayed his thousand-year existence. He looked young, which betrayed his thousand-year wisdom.

"What's wrong?" I asked. I would tolerate anything to taste him.

Evolving

by Natasha Beaulieu

He stands near the dance floor but is not attracted to any of the goth girls twirling around. Despite disliking the old-fashion Victorian style as well as the vulgar black PVC skin-tight outfits, he has been hanging around *Cold Hell* for the last few months; the club appeals to vampires. Real ones.

Anton pretends to be a vampire and knows he has the right to do so. He possesses all the potential to become one. Deep in his flesh, awareness in his soul and knowledge in his heart tells him it is true. He is not yet a vampire, but sooner or later he will have the opportunity to evolve.

It is easy for Anton to align with the club's aesthetic code. His tall slim body, naturally pale skin, black hair and piercing blue eyes are classic features. He only had to buy a closet full of black clothes and he became the perfect goth model.

He knows that most of *Cold Hell's* dark princes are fake vampires, turning back into everyday guys at sunrise. And it's the same with the goddesses of the night, probably wearing jeans and t-shirts all week.

"Your first night here?"

He hasn't paid attention to the girl—well, more a woman—standing next to him, a skinny blond in a shoddy purple dress clutching a bottle of beer in her hand.

"No," he answers.

"I've never seen you before."

So what? He has never seen her either and he has no interest in someone who couldn't possibly be a vampire. The girl has no class. No strength. No power.

How Magnificent is the Universal Donor

By Jerome Stueart

Jacob stumbles from the elevator on the fourth floor of Sanctuary Hospital. He's in a hurry, and feels guilty that he's been detained for three hours at a press conference helping the Deputy Minister field questions. He can still see the lights from the steadycams, purple spots now erasing the hospital walls. The white hallways seem suddenly quiet. His short stride makes it look like he's running, and his beard is hiding clenched lips. At Room 423, he stops at the door. The sheets of the bed are neatly folded. *They moved him.*

Back in the hallway, he breathes in and scans the patient screen, but doesn't find Harlin Moybridge anywhere on the list. It's probably just a mistake. He turns and looks around to find anyone who can tell him what's going on. A blond-haired nurse in a cool blue uniform is standing, leaning over a desk. The desk lamp highlights her neck, and her skin looks like white fire. When he asks her where they've moved Harlin Moybridge, she checks the desk, a flat screen where she moves documents back and forth with the tip of her finger.

"Oh, Mr. Moybridge," she looks up. "Your husband died this morning."

He stares in disbelief. Dead? "He was just in for tests," Jacob says. "Look. There's been a mistake. I would have been called."

She looks hurt, sad for him. She glances back to the desk. "They called you."

The Sun Also Shines On the Wicked

By Kevin Nunn

I arrived later than expected, about two-ish. When Stefan let me in, he appeared different, but not in a way I could immediately put my finger on.

"I came as soon as it was convenient."

Stefan looked me up and down as if taking a moment to remember why I was here, his light eyes flicking here and there before he snapped his long fingers. "Kenneth; of course! There is no need to rush; all won't be completely ready until seven or so."

"Seven!" I declared, allowing my surprise and irritation to show a little at this ridiculous idea. "I need to be home by then, as you well know."

He stepped aside, waving an elegant hand as if this was a triviality, and I stepped past him. "I have a spare chamber, you can stay there."

"Ridiculous! What is important enough to take such a risk?"

"The sun, of course," he declared matter-of-factly.

"Stefan, you are mad." I declared grumpily. Of course he was mad. Most of us were; it was a risk with our condition.

"I sincerely hope so," he said, striding to an elegant antique cask and drawing me a thick red drink. "Madness is clarity, without the shackles of context."

I accepted the goblet. It was excellent. "For this..." I raised the glass, "I forgive you. You have excellent stock."

Quid Pro Quo

By Tanya Huff

"That first dose will keep him out for four or five hours and I can safely give him two, maybe three more without ill-effects." Setting the syringe aside, he pulled a key ring from the discarded jacket and passed it back without turning. "Search the house. If you find her, restrain her, and bring her directly here."

"Restrain her, boss?"

"I suggest you use a generous amount of duct tape."

There were people in the house. Two of them. Given that their years together had taught her all the rhythms of his life, Vicki could say with confidence that neither of the hearts currently pounding out barely-contained fear about two and a half meters above her head belonged to Metropolitan Toronto Police Detective Mike Cellecui—which was interesting, because the house did.

As she slid out the end of the packing crate, an alarm went off, freezing her in place. Watch alarm probably. Maybe cell phone.

"Shit! Sunset!"

They were speaking quietly—high emotion but low volume. Not that it mattered.

"So what? She's not in here."

"You one hundred percent positive about that, Steve? You sure that she's not tucked in between the floors or buried in the insulation in the attic or behind a false wall?"

Whoever he was, he wasn't stupid, Vicki acknowledged as she lifted the section of the false wall away and moved out into the crawlspace. This was unfortunate because he

Biographies

Artist

Ex-gravedigger **John Kaiine** self trained professional artist/photographer is also the author of the critically acclaimed metaphysical thriller *Fossil Circus* and various short stories, including the now filmed short feature *Dolly Sodom*. He lives in a house by the sea with his wife, Tanith Lee and two black and white cats.

Editor

Nancy Kilpatrick has edited ten anthologies, two involving the subject of vampires. She has published eighteen novels, four of them in her vampire series *Power of the Blood*, and three stand-alone vampire novels. She wrote four issues of the *VampErotic* comic series, and has published two novellas featuring the undead. In addition she has quite a few vampire stories in print, a small number of which are included in her collection *The Vampire Stories of Nancy Kilpatrick* from Mosaic Press. Her most recent vampire short story "Vampire Anonymous" can be found in *The Moonstone Book of Vampires*. Lest anyone think she only writes about vampires, check out her website: www.nancykilpatrick.com

Translator

Sheryl Curtis lives in Montreal, where she works as a professional and literary translator. Since 1998, her short-story translations have appeared in *Interzone*, *On Spec*, various *Tesseract*s, *Year's Best Science Fiction 4*, *Year's Best Fantasy and Horror 15* and elsewhere. Her first book-length fiction translation, *Of Wind and Sand* (*Terre des autres* by Sylvie Bérard) was released by EEDGE in 2009.

Authors

Kelley Armstrong is the author of the “Women of the Otherworld” paranormal suspense series, “Darkest Powers” YA urban fantasy trilogy, and the Nadia Stafford crime series. She grew up in southwestern Ontario where she still lives with her family. Armstrong first introduced the character of Toronto vampire Zoe Takano in her 6th Otherworld novel, *Broken*, and has since featured her in several pieces of short fiction.

Colleen Anderson resides in Vancouver, BC where vampires live the high life. “Ember” was a spark on the back burner that came to life—a tale of morality and what happens when a vampire breaks the one taboo. Anderson has published numerous poems and stories, with other vampire fiction “Hold Back the Night” in the Open Space anthology and “Lover’s Triangle” in *OnSpec* and *Dreams of Decadence*. New work is forthcoming in *Shroud*, *Crucible* and *OnSpec*. There are a few more vampires lurking in coffins in her attic, waiting for release.

Montréal author **Natasha Beaulieu** published many short stories before her dark novel trilogy *Les Cités intérieures* (*The Inner Cities*) saw print. The trilogy has been translated into Polish but not yet into English. Her latest novel *Le Deuxième gant* (*The Second Glove*) is still on the dark side, as well as her other projects. Even though there has been no true vampire in her novels up to now, some of the characters share similarities with vampires, like immortality or blood passion. But Anton in “Evolving”, is her first true vampire.

Born in Quebec City, **Claude Bolduc** now lives in Gatineau and has been writing horror short stories for twenty years, dozens of which were published in magazines and anthologies in Québec, France and Belgium. His best stories can be found in the collections *Les Yeux troubles et autres contes de la lune noire* and *Histoire d'un soir et autres épouvantes*, the latter winning the Grand Prix de la science-fiction et du fantastique québécois in 2007. He says, "If vampires live among us, why should their existence be perfect? Shouldn't they face the kind of problems any human being might encounter?"

Rebecca Bradley is currently based in Calgary, but gradually shifting to Ootischenia, BC. While living in Hong Kong in the 1990s, she co-wrote *Temutma*, a novel about a Chinese vampire, published by Asia2000. She has also, just for the joy of it, posted a few Buffy fanfics under the name Whinter. Her story is a boomer *cri de coeur*, written as Rebecca contemplates the approach of yet another damn birthday.

Mary Choo was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, and is a long-time resident of the Lower Mainland. The spectacular beauty of the area forms the backdrop for her story, "Resonance", which was inspired by her belief in the ability of all things to adapt in the face of adversity. Mary's dark fantasy pieces have appeared in a wide variety of publications, including two of the acclaimed Canadian *Northern Frights* anthologies, and her work has placed on the preliminary ballots of the Nebula and Bram Stoker awards (poetry collection), and the final ballot of the Aurora Awards. This is her first published vampire story.

Heather Clitheroe lives in Alberta, a part of Canada not generally known for demons or dark, mysterious woods filled with demons. "Come to Me" was inspired by the stories—be they true or urban legend—of the Aikogahara forest at the base of Mount Fuji in Japan where people go to commit suicide, as well as the mythical kitsune. "When they're good," Heather says, "fox demons can be very

helpful...but when they're bad, they're very, very bad."

Kevin Cockle lives in Calgary Alberta He is a published boxing journalist and a frequent contributor to *On Spec Magazine*. Combining a background in finance with an education in critical theory, Kevin's work is often concerned with the odd dialectic between economics and the weird. Of his story "Sleepless in Calgary", Kevin says: "Calgary's a fast-paced, forward-looking, well-meaning city with all sorts of potential for accidental horror. What happens when people start to fall off the hurtling pace? At what point do people stop trusting their hopes and instead start praying to their nightmares to save them? Calgary's a good town for vampires; Calgary's ready."

Born in England and raised in Toronto, Canada, **Gemma Files** has been a film critic, teacher and screenwriter, and is currently a wife and mother. She won the 1999 International Horror Guild Best Short Fiction award for her story "The Emperor's Old Bones", and the 2006 ChiZine/Leisure Books Short Story Contest for her story "Spectral Evidence". Her fiction has been published in two collections—*Kissing Carrion* and *The Worm in Every Heart*, both from Prime Books—, and five of her stories were adapted into episodes of *The Hunger*, an anthology TV show produced by Ridley and Tony Scott's Scot Free Productions. She has also published two chapbooks of poetry. In 2009, her short story "Marya Nox" appeared in *Lovecraft Unbound*, edited by Ellen Datlow, while her story "each thing I show you is a piece of my death" (co-written with Stephen J. Barringer) appeared in *Clockwork Phoenix 2*, from Norilana Books. She is currently finishing her first novel, *A Book of Tongues*.

Victoria Fisher was born in England but presently lives in Ontario, where she is a student at the University of Toronto. She is distracted from her studies by a fascination for stories of all kinds: past, present and future. In 2006, her short story "Buttons" appeared in *Tesseract Ten*.

A writer for most of her life, **Jennifer Greylyn** has only

recently been persuaded by the thoughtful but not very subtle prompting of family and friends that other people might enjoy her work as well. Her stories have appeared in, among other places, *Abyss and Apex*, *Malpractice: Tales of Bedside Terror* and *Lilith Unbound*, which features the prequel to her story in this anthology. "Mother of Miscreants" was inspired by her fascination with history and mythology, particularly the way in which the lore of vampires has changed over time. She lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Ron Hore, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, can be found sailing on Lake Winnipeg when he's not writing or critiquing for an on-line magazine. Two of Ron's short stories and a poem were published in a collection issued by a writer's group and he won first prize in a Canadian Authors Association contest for a ghost story published in their 2006 anthology. Supervised by his wife and a large, demanding cat, Ron has "waiting-to-be-published" novels on topics such as reincarnation, alternate history, fantasy, and a detective who tangles with vampires. "Chrysalis" allows him to practice his vampiric urges in a family setting.

Tanya Huff lives and works in rural Ontario with her partner Fiona Patton, six cats, and an elderly Chihuahua. Her twenty-fifth novel, *The Enchantment Emporium*, is out in hardcover from DAW Books, Inc. and she is currently working on a fifth *Torin Kerr not-entirely-a-Valor* book. She occasionally writes essays for *BenBella's Pop Culture* books and once in a while does a review for the *Globe and Mail* newspaper. While happy to be back in Vicki Nelson's mythos for "Quid Pro Quo", she has no idea of what inspired the story.

Sandra Kasturi is a poet, writer and editor living in Ontario. In 2005 she won the prestigious ARC Poem of the Year award. She is the poetry editor of *ChiZine* and the Co-Publisher of *ChiZine Publications*. Sandra's work has appeared in various places, including *Prairie Fire*,

Contemporary Verse 2, TransVersions, On Spec, Taddle Creek, several of the *Tesseract*s series, and *Northern Frights 4*. Her cultural essay, "Divine Secrets of the Yaga Sisterhood" appeared in the anthology *Girls Who Bite Back: Witches, Slayers, Mutants and Freaks*. She managed to snag an introduction from Neil Gaiman for her first full-length poetry collection, *The Animal Bridegroom* (Tightrope Books). Sandra has spent entirely too much time wondering where the best place would be for vampires to live, before deciding that the dark side of the moon was a fine idea.

Claude Lalumière is the author of *Objects of Worship*, the co-creator of *Lost Myths* (lostmyths.net), and the editor of eight anthologies, including the Aurora Award nominee *Tesseract Twelve*. He lives in Montreal. The first inklings of "All You Can Eat, All the Time" came to him, fittingly, at Nuit Blanche 2009, the dusk-till-dawn event of the annual Montreal High Lights Festival. But, as often happens, the story he intended to tell was not the story he ended up writing, so almost all the elements directly inspired by Nuit Blanche were gradually edited out with each new draft.

Kevin Nunn lives in Guelph, Ontario with a supportive wife, son, two dogs and four very unsupportive cats. "The Sun Also Shines on the Wicked" is Kevin's second published story, and his only one about vampires, which is why when he's not stealing time to write, he toils away happily as a tradesman in order to pay the mortgage. This story was written because he thinks that no matter what your state—monster or non—you always struggle to be more than you are. That, and he wanted to see if he could write a vampire story that does not use the words vampire, blood or bite.

The idea for this story came from a nightmare **Rhea Rose** had in which the main character maneuvers at night through smog and clouds, unaware of why she is headed to the warehouse, terrified that she will electrocute herself on a power line.

Rhea is a Vancouver, BC writer and a fulltime teacher.

Her stories and poetry have appeared in the *Tesseract*s anthologies, *Talebones* and in other speculative fiction markets. Many of her pieces have been nominated for awards including the Rhysling award for poetry, and two short stories have received preliminary nominations for a Nebula award. A short story appeared in a David Hartwell *Christmas Forever* anthology. Her horror story "Summer Silk" made the 2007 Honorable Mention list in *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror* edited by Ellen Datlow, Kelly Link and Gavin J. Grant.

Michael Skeet is a writer and broadcaster in Toronto. A two-time winner of the Aurora Award, he has been writing SF, fantasy and horror fiction for over 20 years. "Red Blues" was inspired in part by his career as a disc jockey and jazz critic, as well as his love of movie musicals and the golden age of American pop songwriting.

Bradley Somer lives in Calgary. He has had fiction published in many literary journals including *Matrix*, *Qwerty*, *Carousel*, *Existere*, *Filling Station*, *Grimm Magazine*, *The Scrivener Review*, *The Nashwaak Review* and in John B. Lee's anthology *Body Language* (Black Moss Press). Several of his works have dabbled in dark matters. "Bend to Beautiful" is his first venture into the realm of vampires—in this case the ancient Roman bird-like vampire strix. He says that this story was inspired by a similar vampiric encounter which occurred several years ago, the details slightly altered to maintain anonymity. Read some of his tales of the urban fantastic at www.bradleysomer.com

Jerome Stueart is a graduate of 2007 Clarion San Diego. His work has been published in *Strange Horizons*, *Fantasy Magazine*, *Tesseract*s 9 and 11, *On Spec*, and other magazines and journals. He has written several CBC radio series, most notably *Leaving America*, about his immigration from the United States to Canada. Currently he writes and reports for the Arctic Institute of North America, and also teaches writing to teens and adults in Whitehorse. About his story, he says: "I hadn't written a vampire story before. But the

idea of vampires evolving was really interesting to me. After watching the Swine Flu epidemic mania, and remembering SARS, I started thinking about the power of the WHO in our lives, the power of hospitals and medicine, really the power of any institution that can convince people it is right, that they must do something. I wondered how vampires might play a helpful medical role in society — and what might happen if their new status were threatened.”

Bev Vincent grew up in northern New Brunswick and attended Dalhousie University before moving to Texas in 1989. He has written two non-fiction books, over fifty short stories, and numerous essays, interviews and reviews. The *Road to the Dark Tower*, his authorized companion to Stephen King’s *Dark Tower* series, was nominated for a Bram Stoker Award. He is contributing articles to the *Encyclopedia of the Vampire: The Living Dead in Myth, Legend and Popular Culture*. His affection for crime stories inspired him to choose a police detective as the protagonist for “A Murder of Vampires”. His web site is www.bevvincent.com

Steve Vernon is a writer and storyteller living in Halifax, Nova Scotia who’s been writing horror for over twenty years, with two novels, three ghost story collections, one children’s picture book, five novellas, “more poetry than any practical writer ought to write,” a radio play, and a lot of short stories to his credit. He wrote “The Greatest Trick” with an eye towards some of the real parasites in this society—those who would run it. For more info check his website: <http://users.eastlink.ca/~stevevernon>.

Sandra Wickham was raised in rural Ontario and now lives in Vancouver with her husband and two cats. She has been a Professional Fitness Competitor for many years, but is thinking about retiring to start a family. “Mama’s Boy” sprang out of the hopes and fears that come along with the daunting prospect of parenthood. Sandra has been a coach and fitness trainer for over ten years and has just recently returned to her love of writing, with this story

being her second fiction submission and first publication. You can visit her website at www.sandrawickham.com

The bestselling novelist Peter Straub has described **Rio Youers** as "...one of the most vital, most exciting young talents to come along in this decade." Youers is the author of two novellas: *Mama Fish* and *Old Man Scratch*, and the acclaimed vampire novel *Everdead*. Rio says that "Soulfinger" is inspired by the raw, unforgiving power of music, by his love of the blues, and his fear of strange places. He lives in Cambridge, Ontario with his wife Emily.