

Dead Letters: Urban Legends in Fiction

Urban legends are stories, so it seems only natural that they'd make great fodder for fiction. This episode's picks are fictional renderings of urban legends, and all are entertaining reads.

Every year, the e-zine Toasted Cheese runs a little contest they call "Dead of Winter". The biggest stipulation is that the story you write must be set in either fall or winter—and you must write on the theme they provide. Last year's theme happened to be Urban Legends, and the winning stories have been posted in their March issue. Actually, shameless plug, my story "King of Bull"—about an entrepreneur who's made himself rich manufacturing a beer called Urban Legend, only to find that he's violated some unwritten rule in the universe—took first place. Check it out, because I even put a shout-out to Weird U.S. in there. But the other contest winners have done a wonderful job. In "Vespers", by Robert T. Knight, Richard takes a break at a roadside bar, only the characters he meets inside are—well, not who you'd expect. If you've got a strong stomach and like to squirm, check out Fay Bouman's "Movement of Skin"—I promise you won't be looking at taxidermy the same way again. And Tara McDaniel's "The Purchased Bride" is unique because of its strong first-person narrative description of what happens to a small town when a stranger shows up. What gives these stories added appeal is the temptation to identify the urban legends the writers used. Head on over and visit www.toasted-cheese.com.

And my other pick? Not in the same magazine, but an unusual incorporation of the famous Bloody Mary legend called "On a Definite Path to the Moon" by Abigail Keller. It's about a girl who is struggling with the impending death of her mother. It's set in a summer camp—and Keller has depicted the magic and creepiness of those camps with vivid imagery. You can even smell the pine needles. It's in the e-zine The Dirty Napkin's inaugural issue at www.dirtynapkin.com.

Toasted Cheese 2007 "Dead of Winter" Contest Winners

"King of Bull" by Kristi Petersen Schoonover

<http://www.toasted-cheese.com/ezine/2008/8-1/schoonover.htm>

"Vespers" by Robert T. Knight

<http://www.toasted-cheese.com/ezine/2008/8-1/knight.htm>

"Movement of Skin" by Fay Bouman

<http://www.toasted-cheese.com/ezine/2008/8-1/bouman.htm>

"The Purchased Bride" by Tara McDaniel

<http://www.toasted-cheese.com/ezine/2008/8-1/mcdaniel.htm>

The Dirty Napkin: Featured Fiction

"On a Definite Path to the Moon" by Abigail Keller

KP's Note: This story has now been moved to the 'zine's archives. If you subscribe, you'll have access to it. Thanks-5/01/08

<http://dirtynapkin.com/list.php>