

Sebastian Pether, 'Moonlit Lake with a Ruined Gothic Church, a Church and Boatmen' (1810-44).



‘Ill met by moonlight’: Gothic Faery flash fiction

As part of the ‘Ill met by moonlight’ conference, we held a flash fiction competition. Some very inventive pieces redolent of Gothic Faerie were submitted and we have selected the best here. The theme of the competition was ‘Ill Met by Moonlight: Dark Encounters with the Fey’.

Flash fiction is a genre of fiction defined as a very short story. While there is no set word count that separates flash fiction from more traditional short stories, flash fiction stories can be as short as a few words (while short stories typically run for several pages). Flash fiction is also known as sudden fiction, short-short stories, microfiction or microstories. Our competition was not limited to prose, however; we were open to short poems, songs, or even scripts.

Flash fiction is a favoured genre among the English-speaking world’s most celebrated writers for its ability to convey deep truths and universal human emotions in just a few short lines. When done well, flash fiction can convey deep truths and resonate with readers from all walks of life.

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'ILL MET BY MOONLIGHT' FLASH FICTION SELECTIONS

Kimberly Bea

Better to be over the hill than under it:
But I grow pixy-led by my own mind –
A wizened imp; changeling in reverse
With no means to rest my head
And my gold turned to leaves and blown away.
When the elflord beckons, 'Come away', I must say, 'Yes!'

.....

Bryan Brown

The shriek bolted us awake. Of course it couldn't be. The damn foxes, that's all. But always just at the edge, what if? She was gone. We knew she was. Months had turned to years. But there at the window, something darkly playful frolics.

.....

Daisy Butcher

I have taken the geode we found in the stone circle to my tent. The others say it's just a lump of quartz. ... Once I applied heat it cracked open – jagged swirls of silvery purple and – I must be dreaming – I've hatched a fairy.

.....

Alex Carabine

Faerie-stained, I corrupt what I touch with enchantment. My hands leave a trail of charms like the slime of a snail and, syncopated, I walk one beat before – behind – beyond. There's a hollow where my heart should be, filled with the shadows of leaves.

.....

Greta Colombani

'You've been changed', he says with fire on his mind, and I pray his words come true. People of moonlight revels and twisted games, will you come and spirit me away? Snatch away my soul with your fingers sharper than sorrow, for his mind is burning and won't burn alone.

.....

Morgan Daimler

The glittering swirl resolved into dancers, eldritch and unearthly, gossamer clad. Their movements were like the wind, their feet barely touching the earth in the circle they danced in. She stepped forward, knowing it was her doom, but unable to resist that beautiful throng ...

.....

Monty Elsdon (aged 9)

One winter's evening after teatime, mummy and I muffled up and went to the ford near our house to see the full moon and stars that glisten in the night sky. The land was bathed in magical light. As we stood in the forest near the stream, a swirling ball of yellow light appeared, sucking the neighbouring objects into the abyss. A sound like crackling thunder filled the air, as a bright flash of electricity sped furiously from the sky towards us. The air felt heavy and we couldn't breathe. We soon stood by a river, or were we smaller by the stream? We must have been in the Otherworld. Luckily, we knew not to eat any food, including those glamorous berries, and we eventually found a portal home. But it was 3 a.m. when we got back and there was no time to sleep. Then we realised ...

... Time goes quickly in the Otherworld. Very quickly!

.....

Sarah Fissermer

There is light and grass and green. There
is song and dance and fire. There is fairy mist and food. A traveller enters
the clearing, struck by sound and light and smell. All is joy, all is
mystery,
 all is laughter.
 Is all of this a dream?

.....

Emma Fleming

Once again enamoured of an ass?
Elf shot? Pixie led?
Realising this isn't your bed?
Listen.

While they're brewing tea or boiling eggs – gather your clothes. Turn them inside out, slip them on. Slip out. Find the path.
Next time, don't accept that drink. You'll dance yourself to death.

.....

Kyria Van Gasse

The fairy giggled, laying down the last yellowing leaf from the already withering tree. The blushing face of the newborn still visible underneath it.

'Those demanding humans', she muttered. 'Never happy with what they get.'

She pulled out a glittering dagger, heaved her arms in the air and struck down.



Monica Germana

Just below the water surface, their dark shadows dance around in a circle, speeding towards and retreating from a body dropped from above. Frenzy of excitement clouds the water with the rhythm of their dance until no more bubbles come out of the body.



Richard Grant

Norman practised his mindfulness in the garden when the weather was fair but must have slipped up somehow for the mind-things got out. Most fluttered away harmlessly, but a few gathered in a rowan tree and an especially mean one shouted, 'Dance!' And fuck all, he danced.



Kate Harvey

'Too long have the Faefolk enslaved us, or slaughtered us for mere pleasure.' The Bat Queene looked at the gathering, of fur and feather and flesh. 'We must peck at their eyes and tear at their wings.' Many eyes regarded her, fearful yet resolved. 'We fly. To war.'



Michaela Hausmann

At night she sometimes calls to me
and beckons me to have a taste
Of her intoxicating majesty
I answer her with breathless haste

Once my lips feel her first kiss
I'm lost in her sweet crimson deep
My dreams – a bow'r of bliss
In her red-robed arms of sleep.



Sarah McPherson

a.

We are not little men, impish revellers, dwarven hunters. We are the knot in the tree trunk, the crooked root bursting from the earthen bank. We are the rocky walls of a mountain path. In the air. In the glen. Up and down, up and down, we see you.

b.

I clutched at the berries on the branch, not caring how the thorns tore my fingers, crushed the fruit into a soft mess and pressed it to my mouth. Bitter. Sour. Tears streaked my face as I searched for that elusive sweetness, tasted once in a dream.

.....

Hannah O’Flanagan

a.

The room was dark. Moonlight trickled through the window, like ripples of water. The eyes stared back through the glass, yellow and wild, hungry, smiling with malice. The child stepped from his bed and opened the pane.

In the morning, a leaf that shimmered silver was all that remained.

b.

You said you were my godmother. You said I was beautiful, your dear child. You promised me power, you said you’d protect me.

Yet here I sit. Alone, in a mound that once teemed with music and laughter and colour. I’m cold. I’m so very cold, godmother.

.....

Ivan Phillips

A bedroom’s never quiet, not really. It’s never really still or dark. Do you feel the fluttering in the air? There, again – yes? Something sits on your chest, a slight pressure that feels immense. There’s an extra darkness over your eyes. A tickle at your lips. Don’t be afraid.

.....

Saba Razvi

Wishing Well

They say the fairy circle is the short way home. What they do not say: you are undone. Around you, mushrooms sprout with the silver of your wishing, wine on your tongue and willing what is leaving. Only your echo in the moonlight finds its way beyond stone.

His jagged wings unfurled, iridescent in the moonlight. She had never seen someone, something so ... The words escaped her: He was not of this world and the language she possessed could not encapsulate the wonder, the horror, her fear, her desire ...

.....

Madelaine Sacco

We met under a full moon on a road that bit my feet. She wore a dress of spider-silk, her head bowed, eyes dark and deep. I called for help, fear following behind me on the street. I cried when I saw her beautiful grin full of sharp little teeth.

.....

Catherine Spooner

Five Fairy Tales

I. The Green Child

I come from the mid-place between light and dark. I lost my way and you found me here, in a strange land. The sun stings my eyes. Your skin is too pink. Your outlines shimmer. I want to touch you. If I touch you, can I return?

II. Gaslight Fairies

The stagehands try to look up your skirt when you're not looking. Saucy beggars, winking in the flies. They fix the limelight so the moon shines out of our behinds. Screw them, I say. They get a glimpse of our drawers. But only we girls get to fly.

III. Moth Wings

In the dark house, a flicker of a flame. The light leaves traces on the retina; I am not sure what I have seen. Is it a woman or is it a monster? Her hair falls down over her breasts. The flame sings her wings.

IV. Paper Fairies

Into the tangle of briars I go. Wings flicker like paper, like a camera shutter. I open the door and step inside. I could sleep for a hundred years. Outside, the world moves in stop motion. When I wake up, everything will be different.

.....

V. Godmother

I spent my days in dust and ashes. But then you came, asking only for a cup of water. You saw everything differently. There was magic in your eyes and fingers. With one touch, the world changed. Here I am, in a dress the colour of starlight.

.....

Brittany Warman

When she came on stage, the room went silent. Her dark eyes, her long hair, it all seemed to blur, to shimmer and change even as she caught us in her dream. She whispered her song, something about death and the stars, but we were no longer truly listening.

.....

Caroline White

Grandmother had told her never to touch the harp but she plucked a string. The plaintive tone made her shiver, yet she ran her hand over the odd little faces carved in the wooden frame. She cried out, recoiling sharply. Blood glistened on her fingertips. The faces grinned.

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