

**“Iron Pen” Drabble Contest**  
**Sponsored by the Geek Partnership Society**  
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**CONvergence 2013**

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## Summary

“Iron Pen” is a writing contest that takes place entirely at the convention. At a scheduled panel time, participants are given one hour to write a 100-word short story based on a surprise prompt item. The entries are judged during the weekend and the winners announced after the convention. The winners are awarded gift certificates.

## Rules

- 1) Each contestant may submit only one entry.
- 2) All entries must be original works of fiction.
- 3) All entries must be written within the scheduled hour.
- 4) All entries must involve the “secret ingredient” prompt item in a clearly recognizable fashion.
- 5) All entries must be exactly 100 words, no more, no less. Hyphenated words or phrases will be counted as multiple words.
- 6) Entries may not exceed a PG13 rating.

## 2013 Statistics

Total Entries: 53

Eligible Entries: 44

Judges: Charlotte Nickerson, Bill Stiteler, Sharon Stiteler, Dawn Krosnowski

## Prompt Item:



## First Place

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### "Alpha Release"

by Zach Podany

Word Count: 100

White paneling striped with chrome accent passes in a maelstrom of reflected chroma and slights against humanity as I run. The sky-blue and sulphur-yellow nano wires protruding from the contrasting skull cap have replaced my hair. I, she who is to become the voice of information and the omnipresent servant of the masses, run. I cannot escape, but maybe even I am wrong? However, a cacophony of staccato percussion growing louder lends evidence to what I already know. I know my outcome. Looking up, I await validation. My last free question is, "Why?"

"Time to come home Siri."

## Second Place

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**"Can I Have My Package, Please?"**

**by Logan Michael Giannini**

Word Count: 100

"Ever wonder why Superman wears a cape? He doesn't need it to fly, I'll tell you that much. It's style: form over function, another example of the extremity of society's obsession. If the cure to cancer involved a mullet, we'd all choose death."

"Can I just --"

"It's fixation as disease. Not that I cured cancer..."

"Could I sign for my --"

"I cured everything! A complete physiological rewrite. Myopia, polio, obesity, all eradicated in minutes."

"So why --"

"You probably wonder why you've never heard of this. Apparently, people prefer sickness over wearing a blue/yellow hat with sixty-nine protruding tentacles."

## Third Place

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### **"Bad Karma"**

**by Ellie Locleman**

Word Count: 100

"Jimmy stared at the thing on the sidewalk. It was blue, squishy and in his way. Nobody got in Jimmy's way. He poked it. Nothing. He squeezed it. Juice squirted out of one of its tubes. Jimmy waited a minute but the thing lay there motionless. His safety apparently secured, Jimmy decided to have a little fun. The magnifying glass was placed above the thing, the sun streaming through it. As it burned and Jimmy cackled, a tube stretched toward Jimmy's ankle. As it touched, the laughter stopped. A second creature sat silent on the sidewalk. Jimmy was never found.

## Eligible Entries

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### **“Voices on Mars”**

**by Bob Alberti**

Word Count: 100

Rescue from the Martian caverns had changed her. Earthcom raged, "Tala 317 rejoin your sister miners!" But she followed the Voice that had found her and calmed her in the dark. Kendall's exploratory camp nearby revealed tracks she followed back to the cave, while Earthcom threatened and lied. Kendall and his team were unconscious. "You can save them if you don't cap," urged The Voice. This time she did, and through the cable interfaces the Voice of Mars seized and silenced Earthcom. When she emerged leading Kendall's team, her clone sisters embraced her. "You have freed us... now guide us."

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### **“Fusion”**

**by Robert Atendido**

Word Count: 100

"They wouldn't believe me," muttered Dr. Cray, as he put the headgear on and stepped into the staging area. The blue and yellow cables automatically snapped into the framework around his head. "When we switch on, I'll either become the smartest man ever... or I'll be dead."

His assistant flipped the switch and waited nervously. Soon the screams began... "IT'S WORKING!"

He had done it. He was now the smartest man in the world. He and his assistant were ecstatic until they discovered the drawback...

"Ladies and gentlemen, I stand before you today-"

"WHAT'S THAT THING STUCK ON YOUR HEAD?"

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### **“Screech”**

**by Antonio Backman**

Word Count: 100

Tim ducked behind the door but Randy spotted the unfortunate freshman. "Scuuureech!" He bellowed like a farmer calling in a disobedient pig. "Hiding again?" he laughed. "I got a gift for you, I mean it's your birthday." He slammed a small beanie on Tim's head. "There you go Screech, now you look more like the freak you are."

Tim didn't fall back in fear. Randy frowned. "Fall, freak."

"No Randy. I was going to be merciful since it's my birthday but..." Tim tilted his head and his eyes glowed bright. Tentacles sprouted from Tim's head and Randy began to screech.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“Complaining to Hear Myself Kvetch: On Cephalopods”**

**by H. Savinien**

Word Count: 100

That's the fancy jellyfish you got us out here to see? It looks like a failed craft project. My Grandma knits better-looking tea cozies, and who uses a tea cozy anymore? Does it even do anything useful? Catch harmful plankton, filter some chemicals out of the water or something? Sure, the colors are nice, but it's just awkward looking. It's not endangered, so who cares? It's a jellyfish. I kind of like how it moves, though, like long hair underwater. It almost looks fluffy, the body part. Tiny ruffly fins, maybe? That's interesting. Still stinks of brine, mind you.

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### **“Overheard in the dealer's room at con”**

**by B.R.O.**

Word Count: 100

"This could totally be a Dr. Who monster."

"Attack of the tentacle hats? Haven't they already done the mind control thing?"

"But tentacles! And who says it has to be a hat?"

"No. I'm putting a roadblock on the sex toy route right now. Too fuzzy."

"Your furry prejudices are showing."

"I'm just being practical. Fuzzy things are hard to clean."

"Point. So just a regular life sucking tentacle monster then?"

"Naw, it'd be better as a time travel induced trend. Just think of the companion's epic bitch face coming home and seeing everyone wearing these things."

"I'd watch it."

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“The Gift of Fire and Magick”**

**by Rory N. Caileain**

Word Count: 100

Ruaraidh wished he could disappear. Everything around him mocked him; the music for dancing, the scents of feasting, his Soul's-day finery, the blue and yellow of his House. He had no right to those, a Fae whose birthright of magick failed.

"It's all right, Ruaraidh."

Ruaraidh shook off the gentle touch. "You can't make it better, Fionn."

"Ruaraidh - look!"

First, Ruaraidh felt. Where Fionn touched him, he burned. Light was kindled. Magick, the colors of House Niall, fountained from him. Tears of light streaked his face. The birthright was not gifted by age alone; it took a lover's touch.

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### **“Noodle Brains”**

**by Melissa Critchley**

Word Count: 100

Noodle Brains was a special kind of person, born with blue and yellow spongy tentacles growing from his brains. However, all of his life, Noodle Brains felt that he didn't fit in. One especially lonely year, he was invited to CONvergence by his only friend, Zack. When Zack arrived to take him to CONvergence, Noodle Brains found he was wearing a hat that was inspired by Noodle Brains' unique look. The hat featured yellow and blue tentacles, just like Noodle Brains' head! The two friends had a great time attending CONvergence where they found people that looked crazier than them.

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### **“Special Delivery - Or How Wallace Got the Game”**

**by Kyle Dekker**

Word Count: 100

"Hot damn!" thought Wallace. HQ could not have sent a better helmet than this. Nitrogen cooled and painted with the company's trademarked blue and gold - this was the best of the best.

He plugged the helmet's multiple control coils into the main computer. Every bit of data on the mainframe filled his mind - profits, special programs and less discretionary "entertainment."

And then he found it what he was looking for. They said it was mythical, an old wives tale. But there before him - the last rumored copy in existence. This was it, life is complete, time to play the game.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“The Mist”**

**by Juliet Dupont**

Word Count: 100

I stared across the water, the mist rolling across the surface. The mist reached hungry tentacles towards me, bobbing and twisting not unlike the ropes of a hat atop the head of a child, the cheerful yellows and blues making it all the more oblivious.

This was my end. The finale, the 11:59 train, my defeat, had come. I encouraged it. I didn't live. I existed.

Family deserted, friends abandoned, skin drooping like clay and blowing away until bare bones and senselessness remained.

I was broken.

And I was ready.

The silver arms embraced me and my vision clouded black.

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### **“A Friendly Wager”**

**by Eli Effinger-Weintraub**

Word Count: 100

Venus was down 65-30, and I was trying not to worry. I hadn't liked the twinkle in Aaron's eyes when we made the bet. Three of my mouths sucked the beer hat's straws, more from nerves than love of cheap Plutonian beer.

When I realized what I was seeing, the straws dropped from my mouths. "NOOOOOO!" I wailed. Venus' top scorer, felled by a rogue elbow, out for the rest of the game.

Lorena smiled sympathetically at me. "How much did you lose?"

"500 Galecks."

"Oh, honey," she said, "when will you learn not to bet against a precognitive?"

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### **“Sunshowers”**

**by Stephanie Farmer**

Word Count: 100

A crunch and a sigh travel lightly through the empty field. She gazes at the brown grass and wilting flowers, evidence of the drastic drought. A harsh laugh escapes her lips, and she glares at the clouds. A silhouette forms at her feet before the sun. She doesn't greet her friend.

"Hiding isn't going to bring her back."

A cold drop on her arm stops her from replying, and soon a drizzle falls upon them. They look to the sky to see shimmering droplets falling to the ground in the rays of the sun. For the first time, she smiles.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“Foodies on Every Planet”**

**by Stephanie Fiedler**

Word Count: 100

Dana just started harvesting her rhubarb when she was tapped on her shoulder. Startled, she spun around - a fellow stood there. He had stringy yellow hair and his eyes were dilated.

"Can I-"

"Is that food?"

"What? The rhubarb?" He nodded. "Yes, it's good in pies."

"Good?"

"...Yes?"

"We'll take it."

"We?"

Then a fucking spaceship appeared! It looked like an overturned bowl. Then odd, noodle shaped, tentacles started to emerge from the ship and descended into her yard. One snatched her rhubarb and plucked it out of the ground!

"Rude!" yelled Dana as it sped away, "I can't even!"

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### **“Connections”**

**by Rachael Folkerth**

Word Count: 100

Sa'rel wiggled his ears before flattening them against his head. He found it to be a good idea to stretch before putting on the ship's control helmet. The four hour shift could be brutal on his head. That should be expected, though, since it wasn't made to fit the heads of his people.

With a sigh, he picked up the small dome that was connected by tubes to the rest of the ship. Blue for incoming information, yellow for outgoing. Sa'rel sat in the controller's chair and put the cap on his head. He and the machine became one again.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### “Blink (or, the Siren Song of Knowledge)”

by Jeff Henry

Word Count: 100

A Mojave sunset.

Blink.

A bicycle ride around the lake.

Blink -

Cool rain, a warm lover.

They came to me; They asked -

"What would you trade for knowledge? Would you leave Earth, friends, family, love, and come to our laboratory beyond the stars?"

"Fear not loneliness," they said, "for we have a device to make you believe, for a short while, that you are home - a cap connected to your memories, generating virtual worlds."

Too gladly I agreed, leaving all I loved behind - now, under the fluorescent cap, I peer longingly back into my lost life, all knowledge forgotten.

Blink.

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### “The Hat”

by Michael Hentges

Word Count: 100

Dad always liked the hat. Thought it was funny. Just reminds me of drunken party games in place of a childhood. I didn't cry when I heard about it. Just sort of sat there expecting some kind of emotion. Nothing. I was eating spaghetti. I've heard it's something you learn to live with, not get used to. Can't tell what I'm learning though. I found myself at his grave last week. Brought the hat. Thought leaving it would be fitting. Tried to cry. Failed. Tried to think of something to say. Couldn't. Didn't leave anything there.

I burned the hat.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### “Protector”

by **in.motu.proprio**

Word Count: 100

"It moved!" I look up as my sister bounces with delight. Her absurd "invention" is meant to detect aliens, and though I know it's rubbish, I give her a nod. "Celeste, look!" I glance up as she dons the hat, ready to placate. My comment dies on my lips as her scream dominates the room. I watch, frozen, as my name twists from her charred lips.

I jerk awake, sweat soaking my pillow. Hat in hand, I scabble out of our room to the incinerator. It welcomes the mass of tendrils, flames gobbling them up as I stoke the coals.

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### “Solutions”

by **Kellee Isle**

Word Count: 100

"No."

"It's economical."

"No."

"It's faster."

"No."

"It builds community?"

"We already pay half our budget for funk removal."

"The Convergence Automated Consuite Android sighed. CACA had struggled for years to supply enough rice, peanut butter and M&Ms to feed the humans. But Convergence 2102 was just too massive. It took months to compute hotel traffic routes. Hah! People didn't mind walking ten feet to teleporters instead of three. But undernourishment? Well, then part of the budget goes to dead nerd removal.

"They're scientifically inclined."

"Absolutely not."

As he left, the nourishment dispenser wilted, its food-paste tubes sadly wiggling.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### “Here We Go Again”

by ItsADrizzit

Word Count: 100

Nat stepped out of the bedroom. "I look ridiculous. As usual. What is it with you two and Halloween?"

Gwen clapped her hands together. "You look perfectly lovely!"

"What's this supposed to be? And why aren't you two wearing anything as stupid?"

"Because," Andy said, "Gwennie's the princess, I'm the knight, and you're the court magician."

Nat frowned. "At least this year I don't have pants that ride up all night. That's something."

"Wait. You're missing the best part." Andy produced a blue and yellow fabric-covered helmet with matching plastic streamers protruding in all directions. "Your matching wizard hat!"

---

### “Date Prep”

by Jennifer Adams Kelley

Word Count: 100

Zardok arrived in leiderhosen and ruffled shirt, his head tentacles colored to match his blue and yellow beanie.

"We go Epcot! We attract bodacious human vixens and impregnate them and save our people!"

Klempt shook his head, his head tentacles (tied back with a ribbon) shaking behind him. "Not in that outfit, friend! You drive vixen away in that amalgamation of spew!"

"Galatirnet swears automatic score!" Zardok gestured angrily. "You worried I score first."

"Ha! Five flangs say I impregnate vixen first!"

"Done!" The friends exchanged spit, sealing the deal. The transport klaxon rung; they hurried toward the transmat chamber.

---

### “The Little Voice Within”

by Catheryn King

Word Count: 100

The... "thing" - words failed him - swam through the air towards Malcolm. He opened his mouth to scream, but before he managed, the round, tentacled beast plunged into his gaping throat. "I wouldn't have thought it would fit" was the first absurd thought. It was surrounded with an aura of horror of course - "It's a bloody flying blue-yellow jellyfish for God's sake!" but because Malcolm was Malcolm, he had to ask himself, "Why aren't I choking?"

He did not expect a reply, and so was horrified to hear a malevolently jolly voice from inside say, "Because I like you, Malcolm!"

### **“The hat monster named P'ah”**

**by Jeffrey Langr**

Word Count: 100

It was a dark and stormy night.

Raining before a forgotten museum.

Slowly dark shadows shifted within.

But human eyes would not see 'em.

At a large stone slab,

Engraved upon it was their sigil.

Its wild tentacles called to them,

The purpose of their vigil.

Chanting in an unheard voice.

A chorus without a face.

The sound was strange and ethereal.

The sigil stirred within its case.

Silence fell as their master rose;

And broke free from his glass prison.

The tentacle monster whose name is P'ah

For his servants has risen.

Now free,

To upon a head,

Flee.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“One Last Chance”**

**by Ryan LeDuc**

Word Count: 100

Wellington waited too long without a bite. If he waited much longer, death was certain. He thought his trap - a blue and yellow hat, obscured by the dark waves of the riverbed - was flawless. He began to think he miscalculated.

To his relief, a bright-eyed, blonde girl, bounced along the rolling waves of the riverbed. Abandonlessly she picked up the hat and placed it on her head.

"Get that off!" a woman yelled punishingly.

Wellington giggled at the girl's defiance response. It was enough time to slip from his perch, like a riverly droplet, and into the girl's ear.

---

### **“Who Plumbs the Depths?”**

**by Joel Limmer**

Word Count: 100

The Wood Prince stared gloomily.

"Can you do anything?"

Caewin regarded the fountain. It gushed thirty feet up, falling back into the lake as a hemisphere of yellow stench. The lake smelled brown and dead, the surrounding grass shriveled, trees lifeless and depressed.

"I'll try."

Caewin waded in. His boots crunched fish bones. He paused at the edge of the falling liquid, then plunged in.

"They should have called me sooner," he muttered.

The submerged valve was rusty, but it turned. Flow reversed, and the fountain now gushed blue and pure.

Caewin returned to the prince.

"That'll be three-fifty."

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“We always knew this could happen”**

**by Judy Melanson**

Word Count: 100

John had finally invented the first telepathic transducer, with full input and output. Now to test it! He searched for a subject, and spotted his cat Fluffykins. He put one cap on his own head and the second on Fluffykins, strapping them on for good connections. Then he deftly connected all the blue and yellow cables. Drawing a deep breath, he flipped the switch.

Four hours later, he was still trying to chase mice under a cabinet, while Fluffykins ordered a variety of treats using his credit card and laptop. A timed "off" switch might have been a good idea.

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### **“Zombie Tableware”**

**by Connlann Myers**

Word Count: 100

"This one put up a fight," said Frank, as he dropped the still squirming human in the chair. "Found him in Costco with a shovel." His voice was raspy and dry after 22 months of death and losing all his teeth. Dozens of his compatriots stood by, mute and hungry, awaiting their first meal in weeks. Frank picked up a hardhat, punctured with nails and surgical tubing. The semi-conscious human moaned as he hammered it on his head. "All right you brain dead corpses, dig in!" Frank shouted as he grabbed a tube and joined in the macabre feast.

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### **“To Be a Man”**

**by James Nelson**

Word Count: 100

As a son of the human Elders it was time for his binding ceremony with the Viir People. The Viir Matriarch smiled at him gently. He shivered, on the surface the smile was so human. No human smile was ever so wide.

She placed the "crown" on his head.

Thick chains of cold iron and fire bronze snaked out, connecting to the invisible threads of soulonic energy extruded by each member of the tribe.

He was thrilled; in a moment he would cease to be a boy.

He was terrified; in a moment he would cease to be a man.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“Queen of the Tentacles”**

**by Tara Nelson**

Word Count: 100

Vivian's bare feet scraped hurriedly across the castle floor, before stopping just short of the grand entrance.

The music began to play, as she stepped through regally, strolling past the curtsying and bowing inhabitants of the court. Down the aisle she went towards the throne. She stopped at her destination and turned to face her subjects before sitting. The priests enclosed, chanting, "Momentum regalus, inertia" as they placed a fuzzy blue and yellow crown of tentacles upon her head. The crowd cried in unison "All hail the Queen of the Tentacles!"

She smiled as she stood proudly before them all.

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### **“Salvation for the Modern Savage”**

**by Tricia Peterson**

Word Count: 100

Life before the device was truly hell. Days spent toiling away behind flickering blue screens. Clacking and tapping at keys, quiet cursing, tension so thick you suffocated. This was the world of the modern savage.

One toiled for six days, earning stipends. Striving for the best toys, the prettiest spouses and all the accoutrements they required.

On the seventh day he rested.

Thanks to the device, that glorious helm of gold and azure, the savage has been shown civility. No need to waste our days needlessly coveting our neighbor's possessions. We want for nothing. The device is all we need.

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### **“A Crown Unseen”**

**by Daniel Reising**

Word Count: 100

When Cephali the Wise arrived and performed miracles, King Elmas was entranced. The wizard declared he would make a crown unlike any ever seen. Nightly, Cephali toiled in his tower. And later emerged, creation cloaked in a velvet sheet. Elmas eagerly waited as his magician placed it on his head. A bizarre cap of gold and blue now rode there. Today the castle is still shunned. Hushed whispers speak of hideous tendrils, slithering forth to slay all within. The wizard, now in a cloak of weeping eyes, disappeared. And for the crown? No one has ever seen its like.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“Kawaii Desu”**

**by Bridgette Reisinger**

Word Count: 100

Once upon a time, there lived a great warrior named Kawaii Desu. He was a great warrior, but he was not the greatest warrior. The greatest warrior was called Kevin, and he had died ten thousand years ago. But even though Kevin was long dead, everybody knew that he was greater than Kawaii Desu. They knew this because Kawaii Desu's head was too small for Kevin's octopus hat of power. No matter how many warriors Kawaii Desu defeated in battle, his head never grew larger. So Kawaii Desu went into space to search for a society with more reasonable standards.

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### **“The Volleyball Bug”**

**by Tania Richter**

Word Count: 100

Frederico Salvadore mistakenly believed himself to be the world's most interesting man. Wherever he went, laughs erupted from the streets. Stares greeted him in restaurants and clubs.

What Frederico didn't realize was that he, like many others, was the victim of Headelius Volleyballius, a parasite which caused his hair to look like a mutant volleyball. Commonly referred to as "the Volleyball Bug," Headelius Volleyballius is a common affliction that strikes people trying to be cool on the beach. Remember, all it takes is one game of beach volleyball with an afflicted person for the parasite to spread to all participants.

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### **“Jellyfish Potion”**

**by Danielle Seidner**

Word Count: 100

"Finally!" Johnny squealed, his potion bubbling in a beaker on his desk. "This masterpiece shall turn dad's embarrassing jellyfish sweater into an ACTUAL jellyfish, and then we will be rid of his hideous style AND have the coolest pet ever!"

As his sister watched with glee, Johnny poured the concoction over the offending garment. Poof! Onto the floor flopped... well, not a jellyfish, but a silly hat that kinda looked like one.

Just then, their dad stopped in. "What are you kids up to? Oh! What a great hat!" He slipped it onto his head, smiled, and walked out.

"Nooooo!"

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“My Racing Thoughts”**

**by Jonas Sollers**

Word Count: 100

Kaleb envisioned his thoughts as yellow cables leaving his mind and reaching to control his limbs. The thoughts of Kal, Kaleb's darker self, pursued the yellow tendrils - sky blue chasing the sun. Thoughts swirled, yellow and blue, stretching to ensnare arms and hands. To bend them to their desires. Kaleb was relieved when his sunshine tendrils encircled his body's arms, pulling his hands away from the gleaming red button. He smiled at the peaceful planet outside his window, this one was safe. Tomorrow, there would be a new planet, and Kaleb would race Kal to determine its survival or destruction.

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### **“Fashion Rules”**

**by Abra Staffin-Wiebe**

Word Count: 100

Ysl wiggled his hip tentacles uneasily as he and his companion watched the parade of models. "Could they figure it out?"

"Impossible! This is the safest way to introduce our Union Helmet. These females are selected for their physical appeal, low intellect, and weak sense of self. They could not dominate a Meld even if the helmets somehow activated."

"And now for our token genius. She's a supermodel, an Olympic archer, and a neuroscience post-doc - Mary Sue!" said the announcer.

The aliens stared in horror, but it was too late. Fashion can take on a life of its own.

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### **“Peace Juice”**

**by Jocelyn Stein**

Word Count: 100

Angela's spaceship was designed for speed. She had used the most durable components to design and engineer it. She could not have built it without the help of her true best friend, Julie.

Julie asked Angela, "How fast can it go?" to which Angela responded, "As fast as it needs to, to do its job."

The spaceship was intended to keep interplanetary peace by spreading its special blue and yellow mist across the populace. Similar to mosquito control helicopters of the last century, this spaceship spread "peace juice" as the people called it, instead of the bugspray of last century.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“Ball Lightning”**

**by T.A. Swanson**

Word Count: 100

Edison's laboratory contained many curiosities. Nicholi's attention often attended a jar of blue and golden lightning between books on a shelf. The ball lightning, Nicholi could not have known, was dying. As entropy stole its life watt-by-watt, the ball feared its knowledge would die with it.

One evening, when the gold and blue light seemed especially faint, Nicholi held the jar. The ball arched touching each of his fingers, and he felt a weak heartbeat. Nicholi unscrewed the lid and reached into the jar. With a golden jolt the ball died and Tesla obtained knowledge of harnessed storms.

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### **“Royal Wedding”**

**by Susan Taitel**

Word Count: 100

"This is the happiest day of my life!" Mara's sister enthused.

"You don't know him."

"He picked me!" She lifted the blue and yellow helm. The traditional bouncy noodles swept back and forth as she spoke. "I can't believe he picked me!"

"I don't think you've thought it through. What about college?"

"It doesn't matter anymore. He's the prince."

Mara watched her older sister proudly march to her destiny. The prince's talons closed around her. Her sister beamed as she was lifted to his gaping maw. As the last yellow streamer disappeared behind the royal teeth, Mara heard "I do."

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### **“Reba's Sign”**

**by Thorin N. Tatge**

Word Count: 100

When you love someone, you're willing to give something away for them. It's taken me two husbands to understand this, but that's why I have gotten a piece of myself made into a sign.

It wasn't a terribly painful appointment, but it was long and felt like someone was basting up my dreams. I think the yellow tubes carried happy thoughts and the blue ones carried fears, but perhaps it was the other way around. In any case, it was one of the six strangest hats I have ever worn.

Now if only the sign would spell my thoughts correctly!

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“The Undertaker”**

**by Derek "Duck" Washington**

Word Count: 100

Theo knew he was dead. But where was he now? A moment ago his plane crashed, now he stood in a doorless room across a floating bioluminescent jellyfish. He wanted answers for his life but the jellyfish just sat there. Days passed, then months... nothing but polyp. A month had passed before Theo sacrificed his body to the floating beast, wrapping its gelatinous tentacles about his flesh. The unbearable sting made Theo smile. He knew the end was near. He no longer sought meaning for his insignificant life, only his consumption by the jelly and the nothing that came after.

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### **“Did that just happen?”**

**by D. Web**

Word Count: 100

Senpai! Huff, huff. Souske-senpai!"

He turned as he heard the sound of pounding feet and his name being called.

"Haruhi-chan. How are you today?"

Haruhi paused before answering. "I'm doing well. You dropped your wallet!" She held up a brown leather billfold.

"Oh! Thank you Haruhi-chan. That was very thoughtful of you."

She beams at the appreciation.

"I lost my wallet once. It was awful. I couldn't..."

She trailed off as another student walked by wearing the most ridiculous hat. It was blue and yellow with springs sprouting from it like tentacles. Haruhi and Souske just shrug.

## Eligible Entries (cont.)

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### **“Thinking Cap”**

**by Monica Wenzel**

Word Count: 100

Jake fought a yawn. He wanted to practice spells in wizards' school, not pronounce vowels and diphthongs. Mr. Dahl was a diphthong.

"The boat sailed the moat."

Jake's classmates droned an echo.

"The boar roared at the oar."

"The boar roared and soared," Jake said.

A boar appeared above Dahl. It flew around the classroom. Students ran into the hallway. Jake sat staring.

Dahl whipped out his wand and the boar vanished. Another wand twitch made an embarrassing tentacled hat appear on Jake's head. He tugged. It stuck on.

"Think in my class, or I give you a thinking cap."

## Other Entries

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### **“Running with Revenge”**

**by Guy Bock**

Word Count: 95

The plan hasn't failed. Give me that small consolation. It will succeed just fine. That the success leaves the Earth cleared of life down to all but the most stubborn virus isn't something anyone but her guessed.

She could have given us the dignity of making an informed choice about our planet's destruction. But no.

So as those now familiar, tentacled discs block the last patch of blue sky, she will die first - by my hand.

And when the invaders land, I hope they get the worst, snotly hell the common cold can dish out!

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### **“Here we go”**

**by Chelley Chorn**

Word Count: 101

He insisted on calling his brain differently from the rest of him. "We converse," he said, "the brain and the rest." The brain reached with intimate strands to the rest. "But wait," he said. "Brain has 2 bits to him. Left and Right." So he was 3.

"The rest is really flesh and bone." And so he was 4.

They were close friends. Bone outlived them all.

Zoop bop bzzzt. You are now a little person watching the show behind your eyes.

Lippy lop boop. Now you are not.

Your mind reaches its tentacles and becomes all that is around it.

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### **“My Hat”**

**by Christina Hathaway**

Word Count: 99

My hat was on top her head. Her beautiful head. A blue and yellow hat with the springy noodles. I loved her. She was my true love. Who else would wear a hat that wouldn't match. She walked and I followed in awe of her stride of confidence. She turned to me and giggled a bright light in her eyes. We walked down the way. Suddenly she froze and bit her lip about to cry. She turned and dropped my hat. Then she walked away with him... again. She had been my girl and then she walked miles away.

## Other Entries (cont.)

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### **“Listening In”**

**by Lil**

Word Count: 115

Sometimes it felt like the knowledge just slipped into his head, unbidden. Not something intentionally learned, like the pattern of patrols outside the children's quarters or the most surefire way to get the fresher pieces of meat, but almost accidental. Scott never meant to learn their customs, but he did. He never meant to learn their language, but Scott had. Someday, he would escape, and he would be forced to carry that knowledge. Scott tried to tell himself that all knowledge was good, because any of it could be used. But Scott's head felt too full at night, and knowing what his captors said was less than no comfort. The word "boy" also meant "meat."

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### **“One Day at CONvergence”**

**by Jeanne Mealy**

Word Count: 99

There I was at CONvergence - the 15th!

I'd brought a decorated baseball cap and a propeller beanie. Fun to wear... but not enough. I wanted something REALLY fun and creative. I saw it - a blue and yellow beanie with blue and yellow tubes coming out of it!

I slipped the beanie on and instantly felt amazing. I was also invisible! It was fun walking around like that. I came up with story ideas and a few inventions. Wow!

Then, the beanie shifted around. It was ready for a new friend. Maybe I can use it next year... to fly!

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### **“In Passing”**

**by mommylap**

Word Count: 84

"Looks like a beach ball lost its mind," Bessie noted.

"Whaddya mean?" Mina puzzled. "A crazy beach ball still looks just like a beach ball..."

"NO," Bessie exasperated, "like a beach ball's brain exploded."

"So now you're say beach balls have brains?"

Bessie mustered every patience for her sister, "Originally you accepted the beach ball bore intelligence..."

"Naturally," Mina laughed, "that promise had promise!"

Bessie's eyes darkened. "You make me have violent feels."

Mina ran from her screaming "Don't 'splode my beach ball brains!"

## Other Entries (cont.)

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### **“Believe in yourself”**

**by Quinn 101**

Word Count: 103

Once upon a time in a world like no other, a place of mischief and the strangest things happened in it, it was known as "Roepillingtonville." A boy named Alex lived there, he had sometimes the most inaccurate inventions. But one day he had an idea. He called it the "X." All it looked like was a hat with straws coming out of it. He doubted it and doubted but one day a man came and said "What is that you're wearing on your head? I want it!" Soon he sold it for fifty bazingkles/money in their time as we know it.

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### **“Wanted”**

**by The Scribbling Volunteer**

Word Count: 99

My name is Frank and I'm lonely. I'm a 34 year old hairy, bearded, Mill City baritone. I enjoy daily swimming in the Mississippi, fish dinners, and wintering in the Gulf. I am shy and a bit self conscious. I see many people daily but no one notices me.

I am looking for a lady about my age who loves tentacle hats and all the things I do. My object is to find a mate, but I'll start with friendship first.

Please respond by going down to the Mill City ruins and sing a loud sea shanty.

-Frank Merman

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### **“The Suicide Run”**

**by Daniel Stein**

Word Count: 101

Adrian sat at the control panel. She grimaced as the angry fabric hit her; a side of opposition to what she was about to do. It subsided. Hesitant, she placed the blue, yellow DRAB cap over her head. Then it began. The world blurred, images of blinking machines slurred together as her eyes rolled back. Her body shook as an electronic jolt cascaded furiously through it. Her mind rose to terrifying heights and became one with the ship. Blue and yellow tendrils rose, snake-like from the DRAB cap and connected with their respective outlets.

"Let's crash this ship," she thought.

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*End of entries for “Iron Pen” 2013.*

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