

“Iron Pen” Drabble Contest

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CONvergence 2014

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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 way.
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.

2014 Statistics

Total Entries: 65

Eligible Entries: 58

Prompt Item:



First Place

"A Love so False, even the Flowers Were Fake"

by Rachel Maccabee

Word Count: 100

Reclining against the high back of the sofa, she scanned the room with a glance. Very posh. Not surprising, considering who her client was. She took a breath and focused on the task at hand.

The bathroom door opened and he stepped into the room, looking at her with obvious appreciation, his tongue darting quickly over his lips as he knelt beside her. "What my wife would say, if she knew I was here!" he said excitedly.

She draped her left arm around his neck as her right hand placed the barrel of the gun against his gut. "She knows."

Second Place

"The Fairy Trap"

by Alex Urvand

Word Count: 100

SNAP. The cage closed, alerting the hag that her trap had been sprung. She hobbled eagerly to the window to claim her prize. A luminescent fairy, drawn by the pot of flowers on the windowsill, fluttered in desperate circles in a rusted iron cage. The tiny captive looked at the hag with pleading eyes. She began to sob, her tiny wails creating a haunting melody. The hag parted her deformed lips into a leer.

"Please," the fairy implored, "Spare me. I'll give you anything."

"Anything?" The crone jeered.

"Yes."

The hag burped, content. That evening's fairy stew was especially tasty.

Third Place

"Keldra's Gift"

by Marguerite Krause

Word Count: 100

"All right, class, recess. Fifteen minutes!"

The eight- and nine-year-olds scrambled for the double doors of the classroom, laughing. Keldra took a moment to align her papers precisely with the edge of her desk.

Mage Hortense tapped Keldra's shoulder. "You too, child."

Reluctantly, Keldra joined her classmates in the sunny yard. Sharis levitated, Timin conjured his pixie familiar, others tossed elf fire at targets. All had found their magic; all but Keldra.

Dejected, she knelt at the flagstones... and inspiration stirred. Touching the gray dust, she drew her finger upward, willing green leaves, purple blossoms into existence.

Magic!

Eligible Entries

"Ferns and Violets"

by 2bluerats

Word Count: 100

My mother insists on watching the Kentucky Derby every year. She doesn't care for horse-racing as much as watching the women in their colorful hats. Each year, my mother puts on an obnoxious hat that she probably found at a garage sale and sits in front of the television to watch the race.

One year, she wore a hat that had silk violets wrapped around the brim, with green plastic ferns sticking out the sides in a hot glue disaster.

My mother likes drinking a lot of wine. I think it has an impact on her sense of fashion.

"Violet"

by Rick 65000

Word Count: 100

I found out her name is Violet. She became my unexpected chance to reach Atlantis again. I should explain how we met here. Violet was a guard, or an orderly. I don't really know what their jobs are. I have been in this inst... place over 10 years. I don't belong here. Nevertheless, back to telling you about meeting her. Violet brings me work. I do my job. She takes my work. She comes in. She goes out. One day I asked "What's your name?" She answered. I sat there. So simple a name. One syllable. One lie. One day.

(untitled)

by Peder Aalgaard

Word Count: 100

"What did you need, Vinnie?"

"Take a seat Alan. You like this place? Kind of crap. Florescent lights, blue vomit carpet, don't get me started on the sadness colored desk."

"Looks okay to me."

"Ah, you take what you can get, like this plant. It stands out, magenta pot, lavender weird little ball things. Juxtaposes everything else."

"I guess it does. Why am I here?"

"Don't get fidgety, I hate that."

[cont.]

Eligible Entries (cont.)

“Sorry.”

“Listen Alan, do you see what I’m saying? About how plants stand out in places like this? Kind of like how you stand out, almost like a plant?”

"Welcome to the Cabin"

by Antonio Backman

Word Count: 100

"Shut up Max!" Max kept scratching at the door. Still in the kitchen I'm emptying out from the vase the years of dust and dried out spiders.

Not even an hour here at the cabin, and Claire has come inside grinning, dirty as all hell and clutching a bouquet of flowers. "Claire! Let Max in. He's marking up the door!" I hear Max continue to whine outside. "Jesus Christ, Claire, I told you needed look after him." I open the door to let Max in. He doesn't. I step outside to pull him in, and I see Claire.

"Oh god."

"The Secret Keeper"

by Sarah Basil

Word Count: 100

He kept the flowers above the cellar where he drained the bodies.

He wanted her to feel a sense of autonomy; she knew that. To feel she controlled this darkening dream. So he smothered his compulsions to keep her occupied. Teacups sat abandoned with rings of cool liquid in their basins. The flowers ached with thirst.

When he was out, she let a sliver of water trickle down through the false floor. It was a one-time accident that became a repeated act of defiance. Some nourishment for the silent shadows.

Even in secret, perhaps the truth could grow too.

(untitled)

by Thomas Boguszewski

Word Count: 100

“Everything IS PURPLE” screamed Captain Jeremy Tubesoch (pronounced Ta-Bessick) of the HMS Hyssop. “My eyes are made of raspberries!” He was afflicted with a strange madness. ‘Twas a dark and stormy

[cont.]

Eligible Entries (cont.)

night. The crew was AB-22 Like a hive of Africanized (or killer) bees. Who would be the next to go bananas? Maybe the ship's doctor, Jackson? Or Cookie the cook? Turns out the monster was hypocrisy. Gossip was the madness and the source of all their ills. It turned their eyes into fruits and vegetables of all sorts. Everything looked purple indeed. On yes, and also, "Screw Flanders." Yes.

"The Creation Story"

by Briza

Word Count: 100

This is not how the story usually goes. Usually there is a god or goddess. They would be the first in the nothingness, and their actions would create the world. But that isn't the story in this world. What created this world was a woman, a lonely woman, living in her own world. It started with a pot, then a single seed, and then many different seeds. Each seed grew together. They intertwined and cross-bred. They created new and wonderful life. That attracted more life and the world grew. And that, my son, is how this world was created.

"Berries"

by Molly Burke

Word Count: 100

I looked at the plant. Berries? Not supposed to happen. The last class I needed to graduate from Mage University, and I had failed the final.

Our Professor entered. He gasped "My God!"

"What?"

"The Prophecy is fulfilled! The fourth item is here!"

Aedna shrieked, "No!" I was shocked. Rumors existed of conspiracy against the Portal, but I never guessed Aedna a traitor.

Though she hurled fire, she could not stop the Portal. I jumped through, falling to unknown depths.

Aedna was right. I still fall. She must have destroyed the berries: Nobody has joined me, in this eternal void.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"Not Really"

by Beth Carr

Word Count: 100

One of the negative byproducts associated with turning fifty is the "Red Hat Ladies." You know, that group of women who celebrate their age by wearing red hats and purple dresses. Red hats, okay... purple dresses, no way. I hate purple.

My friends, however, presented me with a green plant in a purple pot to "celebrate" my entry into this exclusive club. I hate purple.

I kept it in a corner of the kitchen, ignored. Then it bloomed... delicate purple flowers nestled among the waxy green leaves. I love purple.

Not really. But it sure sounded happy and uplifting, yes?

"Color Hunters"

by Victorya Chase

Word Count: 100

"This should fetch a pretty penny," Mariska said, holding up a carapace. From it sprouted some sort of plant, but you could never tell on these worlds.

The color was money. A purple not existent on earth. It would start a new trend.

Mariska tossed me the creature.

"Dior, or Prada?" I asked. We walked back to the ship.

The thing began to move, pushing out raspberry-like eyes atop tentacles. The sound it made was more inquisitive than concerned, until it met our grinder.

"My vote is M.A.C," Mariska said. "They've been looking to up their make-up game."

"Moving Day Dilemma"

by Rory Ni Coileain

Word Count: 100

"They accepted our bid - I can't believe it!" Derek fluttered six inches into the air in excitement. Getting into the exclusive co-op had been a lifelong dream for the faerie couple, and now it would be their honeymoon cottage.

[cont.]

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"Yes, but can you believe the restrictive covenants?" Gavin frowned. "Nothing inanimate. What are we going to do with your surfboards?"

"Simple. Leaves." Derek grinned.

"What about my tutus?"

"Purple flowers. Don't be such a wuss."

Gavin sighed. "Playtime. It is going to be our honeymoon."

"Round, firm - I've got it!" Derek unfolded his hand.

"Berries?" Gavin laughed. "I love you."

"The Mystery of the Purple Pottery"

by Roy T. Cook

Word Count: 100

Sherlock Shylock, ancient Talmudic Detective, nudged the purple-glazed terra cotta shards with the toe of his sandal. The final piece of this most difficult of criminal puzzles was now in place: the crucifixion was no more than contrived distraction, meant to cover of the Keystone Cop capers of the Jerusalem PD.

The real story was more mundane. The victim's increasingly eccentric religious devotions led to domestic squabbles and eventually his neglected foreign consort, Mary, restored to drastic, and fatal, measures.

Like and impossibly anachronistic games of Cluedo, Jesus of Nazareth was killed in the temple with the Magdalene's flowerpot.

"A Compound Riddle"

by Nathan Danielson

Word Count: 100

First, mud turns, by hand, on wheel, now it's formed.

Left on a shelf holding tokens to those once mourned.

On to the fire, used to make the form hard.

Wilting memories sad in their stand, their beauty now marred.

Elegant colors and shapes, stroked on, is what comes last.

Ravaged by time the delicate frames whither like memories past.

[cont.]

Eligible Entries (cont.)

Placed on that shelf, a beautiful sight that all see.

Only too soon their occupants pass, known only to memory.

Two things I have spoke of, only one withstands time.

See the firsts till the end, to answer this rhyme.

"Common"

by Tokyo Dave

Word Count: 100

Rob was finally done being dead. They'd taken most of his consciousness – a shifty, incorporeal thing – and reworked it, mashed it up, processes he didn't understand before and didn't understand now. The vessel purchased by his surviving family was cheap and "brittle, without normal range of motion, stay away from contact sports, drink lots of liquid, don't smoke."

He was memories of poverty, fights, young and true love, stuffed into a living shell, shaped molded.

Reinserted into the workforce after 27 years, he waited for an assignment. He was a fake plant in a fake pot and he meant something.

"Broken Dreams"

by Angelina DeGrizz

Word Count: 100

The leaves rustled in the wind as she stared up at the summer sky. The clouds were light but the heat oppressive and it weighed heavily on her.

The purple fragments lay splattered in blood. How could she ever come to terms with what had transpired? She believed they were her friends. She had watched them live beautiful lives, laughed at their joys, and cried at their funerals. She was right there! Why couldn't they hear her? Why couldn't they see she needed them?!

But there was no one left to forgive her. The world in the pot was gone.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"Lucky Shot"

by Rusty Detty

Word Count: 100

Ammunition was scarce, but the rifle was useless unless she was sure she could hit something. She aimed at a flower pot in the third story windows of an abandoned apartment block. One side of the building had peeled away and fire had gutted the rest. She breathed in, held the air in her lungs, pulled the trigger. The pot exploded in a shower of grey earth. She exhaled, feeling a surge of pride, but a fresh spray of crimson on the wall beyond the pot arrested her breath. Then came the shouts. She threw down the rifle and fled.

"The Ghosts of Violet"

by Lindsey McDonald Dorsey

Word Count: 100

Violet only spoke to the ghosts now. Once, she'd cared to wonder if they were real, or if each wrinkle on her face replaced one in her brain.

The ghosts' words were always kind, though; their voices soft as rabbit fur. She'd had one as a pet, once, a rabbit called Oliver.

Father had said he ran away.

"Is Oliver there?" Violet asked the ghosts. "Is father?"

Whispers piling warmly around her, they changed the subject, as they always did.

Violet felt more like a child now than she ever had, and like a child, she let herself be consoled.

"A Lonely Prophet"

by Tim Dufresne

Word Count: 100

No town should be called normal. Especially a town with a prophet of the second coming in residence.

When the flood drove most from the town Pastor John called them "Weak, impure, and faithless" while smashing one of the church's beloved purple flower pots.

When the factory closed, and the kids left to find work, Pastor John called them "ungrateful" and smashed another pot.

Another pot for the fire, another for the tornado.

[cont.]

Eligible Entries (cont.)

These days there are no pots left and Pastor John just weeps in the church, while I keep the old traditions.

Can a lonely prophet still prophesize?

"Always"

by Marty Farley

Word Count: 100

She was running late. Every year, every year she promised herself she'd try harder. Yet every year the sun was nearly set before she got there.

This year she could only grow a pathetic little bush, stunted and fragile. How fitting, she thought bitterly.

The cemetery was deserted when she arrived. The ground squelched as she walked. She knelt before his gravestone and carefully tore away the long grass, revealing fresh soil underneath. The little bush looked perfect against the marble, its leaves gleaming in the retreating sunset.

"I'm sorry I couldn't love you better. But I will always try."

"The Centerpiece"

by Ashe Free

Word Count: 100

The height of the season, the peak of joyous satisfaction, could this be it? Bev sat by the table, wondering, terrified by the concept of life after Roger. Roger; the carpenter, the first to lend a hand, the love of her life. Of all the endless parades of parties Bev has hosted, after all the napkin rings, fondue and wine, she never fathomed that she could be capable of, or even be associated with such a lifeless affair. She fondled the Christmas centerpiece before replacing it with a pot of plastic purple flowers and beaded raspberries. Christmas was officially over.

"Failed Experiment"

by Brian Hagen

Word Count: 100

Don't eat the yellow berries. It was the first rule all children learned before they were released from the Education chamber. As Ariana stepped into her new world, she kept the first rule in mind. Immediately, aromas overwhelmed the rest of her senses. Ariana saw distant purple walls begin to sway, as she became intoxicated by

[cont.]

Eligible Entries (cont.)

the sweetest of smells. The first rule was gone from Ariana's mind when she reached out and plucked something from a nearby bush.

A moment later, Ariana's world went black.

Overhead a voice crackled in the air, "Another failure. Send in the next one."

"Resolutionary"

by Daniel Heneghan

Word Count: 100

It was Artie's finest work. The symmetry was exact, the colors matched perfectly, and the geometry was just right. He folded up his arm, paint cans turned back into fingers.

"It looks all pixelated. Why didn't you use a better picture?"

Artie turned to his friend, a frown clanking onto his face.

"That is how I see it, the math of the biological phenomenon."

"You don't understand! I wanted to see flowers again! You're taking away their beauty!"

"It is beautiful. Chaos isn't a binary function, order is just as true in wild flowers. I wish you understood my art."

"I Couldn't Write a Story Because Aliens"

by Jeff Henry

Word Count: 100

Flowers, flowers... all I can think of is Zhnung 2: dreaming he's a butterfly among the flowers. Who wants to read about that? These are sci-fi fans! I need to turn this story in a new direction!

As he thought this, the wall of the Doubletree was blasted open by a green laser. Aliens came in and they looked like plants wearing space suits. They took everyone aboard their spaceships and put them in cages. Some of the aliens were "fleshythumbs", which meant they were good at keeping humans. Others forgot to water them. And so Jeff never finished his story.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"Anna's Bloom"

by Mina Hunter-Baltes

Word Count: 100

The purple pot had been a gift given many years ago, back when Caitlyn's world was as colorful as the flowers growing within the container. The flowers weren't even ones she liked; in fact, Caitlyn hated them. She preferred roses, lilies or any other flower of classic beauty, but Anna had adored them covering the house with delicate purple blooms. This particular pot was the first to enter the shared home, and it was the last one remaining. The rain hitting its leaves, coming from an open window, could only remind Caitlyn of the terrible accident and Anna's horrid death.

"The Last Breakfast"

by Kellee Isle

Word Count: 100

The end came unremarkably with piano-key be-smiled family, a bowl full of plump berries and a honeyed voiceover: "Feed your family right." I bought the beast of engineering in its purple flower pot. They'd manufactured a miracle; leaves, berries and roots, delicious, fat burning, nutrient packed. A chlorophyll clad messiah.

But the second coming is terrifying. My sweat-slicked palms make my butcher knife slippery, and my ribs feel like cracking under the strain of my lungs searching for air. The drooling pod is coming, pushing through the vicious jungle its vines created. Now the plant is all that survives.

"Not just another potted plant"

by Rebecca Kludy

Word Count: 100

She'd been part of the galactic library since its inception. Seated in a place of honor, she'd witnessed every piece of information, every book, every treatise and thesis as it was recorded in the vast data banks. She contained every bit of knowledge in the known universe. The answer to every question - spoken and unspoken - flowed through her stems and leaves. Philosophical and scientific brilliance, unmatched by any other being in existence, pulsed within her blossoms and berries. She knew everything - no, she understood everything. Which is how she knew the one, painfully inescapable truth: sentience was wasted on vegetation.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

(untitled)

by Miriam Krause

Word Count: 100

After four hours of staring at the soul-suckingly gray walls of the new cubicle, Yvette knew she'd soon go mad. She took lunch to drive to the garden store, buying the first colorful thing she saw.

"Why is it on clearance?" she asked. The clerk shrugged, but wouldn't meet her eyes.

She placed the bright purple pot between her monitor and stapler, watered the scraggly plant, and got back to work.

She finally got an answer to her question three days later, when a voice boomed from the foliage, "Would it kill you to buy a little plant food?"

"The Garden Holds the Key"

by Taylor Kunicki

Word Count: 100

Spring is always like taking your first breath. After holding it too long. It's when the frozen ruins of winter are brought back to life. Emilia can't remember the last time she'd been so excited to be outside. Then again, since the accident; she can't remember much from before. Nervously her fingers played against the purple pot. The garden that's painted blue by tiny flowers, has become a foreign land. Once the tiny girl knew all its secrets. This used to be her home. Now it mocks her with secrets, of her own. Things not even she knows are hidden.

"Just a simple exercise"

by Kristen Kuykendall

Word Count: 100

Deft fingers slowly moved through the soil, each grain rolled between index and thumb. The precision used in all things he did was not lost in the act. Green eyes watched the dark dirt drift back into the pot. Plain in color but purple none the less. A frown turned his lips into something more than apathy. Though he wanted roses, the gentle purple of wild flowers would do. Green fauna to accent and strange berry like decorations that glittered in the sun. All for an exercise. If he could care for one small potted plant, it could become more.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"Really? That's the Prompt?"

by Marie Lang

Word Count: 100

The day is nice, the grass is green.
The breeze is fresh and cool.
But I'm inside, scribbling words
It's like I'm still in school.

It's Iron Pen; I'm told it's fun
To write from just a prop.
But having seen this flower pot
I think I'd like to stop.

Its violet base, the purple flowers
The leaves made out of silk
The hell is that? I have not seen
Anything of that ilk.

I racked my brain; I thought and thought
No inspiration would come around
So I dropped my pen to find the bar
Where liquor would abound

"Flowery Dreams"

by Betsy Langowski

Word Count: 100

Jo-Ann Fabric is a lonely place to live. You meet some good folks who understand you. The flannels are friendly. So is the fleece. But the cotton tends to judge, especially those of us in the satin family.

When I finally found love, I knew it couldn't work. A frilly girl took my bolt to beg her mom, over by the wreaths and incense.

I crinkled with excitement when I saw him: the green leaves! I imagined our future; me as the purple petals, his stem proudly holding me up.

Mom said "No." I returned home, flower dreams lost.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"...And the Flowers Fall"

by Joel Limmer

Word Count: 100

The purple pot of flowers fell through space. And by “space” we mean the vectorball court where the Madlans play.

The hoops teleport the blue balls through space and the red balls through time. Today the hookward hoop was shifting blue exactly nine quandals directly antigravityward, and shifting red exactly eleven quiliqs into the past.

The pot passed through the hoop. Confused by its purple hue, the hoop decided “Whatever”, cancelled its momentum, and sent it through both space and time.

It takes an object exactly eleven quiliqs to fall nine quandals.

The purple pot of flowers fell through space.

"At what cost?"

by Ellie Lockman

Word Count: 100

A breeze floated through the window, ruffling his leaves pleasantly. Sun warmed his purple petals. His friend Sal sat beside him, a perfect afternoon. Suddenly, the dirt beneath him shifted. Something sharp dug into his stem, vines entwined themselves around him. Sal hissed sharply at the small red intruders. They were hurting his friend, uprooting him. The human had said not to touch the plants. Sal ignored her and attacked the invaders, biting each bud off viciously. Of course the human saw.

"BAD CAT!"

He was dragged roughly away.

Sal had saved the plant. He would pay dearly for it.

"Bait and Switch"

by Ken Lubold

Word Count: 100

It was just a flower pot. Blue flowers with green foliage and red and yellow berries. Not much to look at. But our scientists swore that it would produce life. Plant the pot on an appropriate planet and it would flourish. A breathable atmosphere would be produced in less than twenty years. We arrived today. I raised the

[cont.]

Eligible Entries (cont.)

dome off the plant in order to extract it from the pot. But as I inspected I realized something was wrong. It was plastic. The plant was a fake. Who would do this? Why? I wasn't looking forward to the trip home.

"The First Convergence"

by Luigi-o-saurus

Word Count: 100

As she glanced away from the flower pot and caught his face, she knew his excitement couldn't be contained. The event was hours away. His bags were packed and ready to go. She didn't understand the allure of putting on a mask and becoming a different person. It wasn't as though their lives were boring. The only thing she understood was that she loved him and wanted to support him. As she handed him the last bag, she whispered into his ear, "No matter how deep you fall into this rabbit hole I will be waiting for you right here."

"Cheap & Dirty (Just like Grandma)"

by Michael P Maccabee

Word Count: 100

I loved my grandmother's pie. Often I would sit in her home and enjoy it while concentrating on her old, dusty flowers. They were old for as long as I can remember, and they always accompanied the pie.

Even now as I write, the subtle warmth of that pie permeates my person and I am a younger self, sinking my teeth into that delicacy for the first time. Oh, to return to a time and place when cheap, dirty flowers filled my eyes, and the sweet tang of grandma's pie enriched my soul. Though, one piece could never be enough.

"Gardener's Plot"

by Jacob Maurer

Word Count: 100

Daryl was sweating. Alison arrived in three days. His dirty fingernails seemed permanent, and his neck was raw in the sun.

She had called yesterday.

"Hello?"

"Yes?"

"This is Alison, your new tenant! I'm so excited to spend the summer in your cottage. I've read all about the famous gardens of the estate - before it burned - so I can't wait to paint the flowers at the gardener's cottage!"

[cont.]

Eligible Entries (cont.)

Looking out the window Daryl saw scrubby grass, weeds, and his dying pickup.

"You'll love it."

Alison smiled at her painting. Just knowing the history of these plants gave her fresh inspiration.

"Potted Tree"

by Ashley McGowan

Word Count: 100

A small boy from an orphanage, alone and sad, his only possession was a small tree in a pot. Still growing but very beautiful. He loved it and only it. He cared for nothing and no one. Until a woman came looking for a daughter to help her with her flower garden. She was not surprised to find that all the girls would rather play with dolls rather than plant pretty flowers. She saw the boy staring at his tree. She took him home with her as her son. They planted the potted tree and it grew big and beautiful.

"Fecund"

by Natalie Morse-Noland

Word Count: 100

Josei insisted he didn't mean anything by it. "He doesn't know any better. He's not from around here."

"He's been around long enough." Celene didn't want to touch them, to even look at them. If it hadn't been for Josei's dutiful watering, the flowers would have already wilted. "How could he not know?"

"Well I think they're pretty." Josei gently brushed her fingers against the petals, blue as a drowned man's lips. "And just wait until these are ripe!" She fondled a berry - bulbous, swollen, red. By now they had grown so large they drooped on their stems.

Celene shuddered.

"Hope"

by Eyo Peters

Word Count: 100

The night was still as a girl sprinted through the streets. A glimmer of light caught her eye and she pressed herself against a wall. She heard foot steps nearing. There were shouts or orders and directions followed by the clanging of metal. The girl willed herself to stay still, cursing her breathing and beating heart. Soon the clamor died down. She quickly flitted to a small alley, clutching the item she just stole. It was nothing special: Just a simple pot with plastic flowers. The girl pulled the flowers out and at the bottom lay a warm, glowing egg.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"Melusine"

by Elizabeth Petersen

Word Count: 100

I call her Melusine because I never knew her name, if she had one. But she had eyes like amethyst, and lips like plump raspberries. Black hair floated around her, smoke from the golden fire of her skin.

A twitch of her lips beckoned me. I froze as the city roared on. So simple to take that step to her. The air around her seemed to splinter, ready to break open to something... else.

But I froze.

A sad flash of regret in her eyes, and then an empty sidewalk again.

Which was the madness: her face or my cowardice?

"Last Hope"

by Jessica R.

Word Count: 100

"What is it?"

"It's a flowerpot."

"Well, I knew that. I mean, what's in it?"

"I'd assume it's a flower."

"Now you're being intentionally dense."

Silence.

"I'm just asking, what's the deal with this flower?"

"It's been eight years since mankind first unleashed the Plague, a bioweapon strong enough to drive the planet to extinction."

"But what's the flower gotta do with that?"

"That flower is the last of its kind. It is the only known cure for the Plague."

"So I have the fate of all humanity in my hands?"

A crash of pottery.

"Rest in peace."

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"The Olive Branch"

by Tamar Gela Rubinstein

Word Count 100

We were at Bonaroo when it happened. For weeks war was brewing between the rival Mid-East factions.

We expected war, not the end of the world. It took three weeks, Mad Max style, to reach Chicago.

Then we saw the Flash, we lost our humanity, our faith. Religion caused this and now there was only darkness. No ark to save us, no Noah to appear.

When all hope was gone, in a field where a church once stood, we saw it; an ethereal purple plant with berries. Our olive branch! A new day would dawn again. We would survive.

"The Right Accessory"

by Paige Rudnick

Word Count: 100

Purple Pot! Phyllis loved the purple pot her new person selected for her. She thought it accentuated her flowers nicely while, and this was important, complemented her berry and yellow colored berries in a way that wasn't too matchy matchy.

Oh! The pot was perfect!

Placed in the window, the sun's warmth warming her soil, Phyllis set to work scrubbing the air of Carbon Dioxide and exhaling Oxygen. She felt, plain sexy at her work.

It was ok that she was the lone plant of a grad student who was rarely home. She had confidence and a job to do!

"A Warrior Mending"

by H. Savinien

Word Count: 100

Violets grew in the moss beside the path every year, like the tick of a year-long clock. Amara dug out a small patch and potted them with a raspberry cane for Catherine's bedside table. The flowers stood out amethyst against the greying brown of Catherine's skin and she muttered over the business of tending plants, ignoring them whenever Amara was in the room. She peeked in later to see Catherine's calloused, scarred hands, carefully plucking some dead leaves and tipping a spoonful of water from her glass into the pot. Amara smiled and went to start the morning's baking.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"A Convergence Story"

by Sirena Stremski

Word Count: 100

Her eyes were the color of fresh lilacs. It was most unusual, and demanded my attention right away. She walked with a stern look on her face, and a meaningful, fast pace as her knee-high boots jabbed the tile. It was early July in Minneapolis, and any good Minnesotan knew what happened in early July. She caught my eye. Of all the costumes, cosplays, and fanatics I had seen that day, she was the only one I truly saw. I called her the lilac-eyed woman and set out on discovering who she really was. What was her story?

"Petunia Party"

by Jim Tincher

Word Count: 100

"Congratulations, Buzz!"

Mall-Wart's newest employee shuffled onto the stage, eyes downcast.

"Who is this guy?" Dan asked Kati. "Where'd he come from?"

"I don't know. He showed up six months ago. I think he worked for Amazon."

"I heard he came from Europe," Sean corrected her.

"He gives me the creeps," complained Becca.

"Whoever he is, he's a merchandising genius," shared Sue. "His singing petunias are selling like mad. They mesmerize our customers. We can barely keep up with inventory."

At that exact moment, twenty miles above their heads, a thousand ships decloaked. Their intercoms buzzed.

"Begin Project Petunia!"

"The Plant" (or "Hunger")

by Jivar Tripp

Word Count: 100

Water the plant. Necessary. That glorious purple Plant. Flower? Vine? Bush? ...Tree? All these things. The watering can is clogged again. Forgot to clean it. Red. Is that rust? Water the Plant. The Plant is not in its place. It has moved... What will I find this time? A bird? A cat? ...This place is too big, corridors to nowhere.

[cont.]

Eligible Entries (cont.)

Rooms with no use. Trapped I am. Must water the Plant. Found it... In its favorite place. The music room. Soundproofed. But where is the surprise?

No matter, I'll water it like usual...

... Oh, I see... I'm the surprise.

Blackness...

"The Modern Home" (or "The Fairies, Thwarted")

by The Empress of the Universe

Word Count: 100

"OW!"

Leaves quivered.

"Hush."

"Who puts thorns on a plastic plant?"

A sigh. "The same creatures who keep plastic plants in the first place. Monsters. Hurry up."

"These berries taste terrible. Are they poison?" A slap.

"Ow! Again!"

"Don't eat those. They're not poison, and they aren't yours. They're plastic."

"Plastic flowers, plastic poison berries, plastic thorns. The creatures have gone mad."

"That's why we rescue the babes from the plastic world and present them to the green. Go! Quickly!"

Leaves quiver. A pause.

"Well?"

"We're too late. The babe in the cradle has been turned to plastic!"

"Those monsters!"

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"Sylvio"

by Tahoe Vanilla

Word Count: 100

Sylvio led a small life, in a small house, in a small town, utterly unremarkable in any way. Sylvia was unmarried, had no children, and no friends. He grew flowers instead. One Tuesday a treacherously elaborate garden construction collapsed and crushed him. A fittingly small, poorly-attended service was held, and he was buried alongside his flower pots. Several millennia later, he was unearthed and, due to a series of misunderstandings regarding the significance of burial rites, historians briefly though Sylvio to be a powerful Emperor, for about twenty minutes. This was the most important twenty minutes of his life.

"Message Received"

by Elizabeth K. Walsh

Word Count: 100

Melany needed something eternal. A symbol of her commitment to this relationship. Silk flowers in a durable, unbreakable plastic pot seemed like the perfect solution. The artificial purples added warmth to her white and chrome loft, while the cemented dirt interior ensured the continued cleanliness of her living space.

Melany placed it just so on her breakfast bar and left for work, peace offering would be accepted. Ten hours later she returned home to find the pot shattered, the petals scattered, and her new cat Narcissus curled up on top of the breakfast bar.

The battle lines had been drawn.

"Servitude"

by K. West

Word Count: 100

Walking through the woods I came across these lights that led me to many more lights that danced around me. As we danced I grew tired and sat upon the ground amongst purple flowers with berries on them. I ate some and soon fell asleep.

When I woke to my horror I was no longer and was surrounded by tiny creatures.

"Who are you and what has happened to me?" I screamed.

"You stole from the forest and now you must pay it back," one replies.

For a hundred years I served the forest only to be released for death.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

"Sweet Fruit"

by Kristina Winn

Word Count: 100

"Kristie Bell, seven years old, is the fourth child to go missing in as many years -"

"Turn that off, I don't care."

"I like to keep current." Artemis rolled her eyes. Stanley continued reading his paper, sipping his coffee.

"She's at it again." Stanley didn't react. Artemis had an obsession of watching their neighbor, Miss Borden, garden. Her Dragon Bush always produced award winning berries. Delicious yellow and red fruit, plump from the delicate purple flowers.

"How does she do it?"

"Just ask about her technique."

"No. One day the right child will come along with the proper pH balance."

"Guardians of the Flower Pot"

by Jason D. Wittman

Word Count: 100

This had been an easy post, Violetta reflected. Watch over the flowers in this pot, make sure they flourish. What possessed that lummoX to put in those tacky glittering balls?

"I know how to deal with this," said the dark faerie as she stood with Violetta, looking at them from behind a leaf.

"Don't hurt them, Marda."

"Hurt them?" Marda advanced and struck one with her staff. "Does that sound like life?"

So they ground the aberrations to powder, and sowed the ground with them. Soon the lavender petals shone at night with a light like the shining of stars.

Eligible Entries (cont.)

(untitled)

by Wraightsky

Word Count: 100

“It doesn’t match anything.”

“It matches just fine.” The man pushed the flower pot an inch to the left and then moved it back again.

The girl eyed the new prop for their office.

“It’s fine. Let it go.”

“You’re the one that keeps moving it.”

The man withdrew his hand from the pot.

“I wish we could use real flowers.”

“It doesn’t matter to me. I think these look nice.”

“Only because you’ve never seen a real flower before. There’s no comparison.”

“Nobody forced you to move to the moon.” The man slid the pot forward. “It’s fine. Look.”

Other Entries

"The Final Experiment of Dr. Nocarne"

by Nathan Gamer

Word Count: 103

"I suppose this is a breakthrough nonetheless," thought Dr. Nocarne. As he sat there immobile, he wondered if it was enough of a breakthrough to keep his funding.

He had tried for months to transmute plant matter into muscle fiber. "A humane and sustainable source of meat," Nocarne had promised the Board of Directors. But after so long with no sign of progress, the Board had threatened to pull the plug on his project.

It drove him to take a chance he wouldn't have otherwise, and the resultant explosion from his Transmute-o-matic turned Nocarne into a small, sentient pot of flowers.

"A Peaceful Whisper"

by Michel Grimm

Word Count: 102

She stepped solemnly across the field of gravestones. The wind gently brushing against her cheeks. A bushel of flowers was clasped closed to her chest. With this it would finally end.

The haunting had gone on for so long she wasn't entirely sure how much time had passed. The moving objects, the broken windows, the screams that echoed her nightmares. As she arrived at her lover's grave she knelt. While she lay each purple flower neatly the wind intensified.

When the last flower had touched the grass a stillness fell upon her. Her eyes only opened when a voice whispered "Thank you."

"Flowers for Mother"

by Harveg Guillet

Word Count: 96

I never understood how important I'd become when my new parents took me home, father told me I'd be young forever, and my new mother would cherish me for all time.

Father sang to me on our first night home, it was so lovely and soothing.

I awoke the next day fully grown and dressed in blue, next to me was a beautiful woman who father doted upon.

"Isabella so long as you have this flower next to you, you shall never die or grow old," Father explained to my new mother before he left us.

Other Entries (cont.)

"The Night An Adventure Began"

by **MM**

Word Count: 101

I was 14 years old. It was late at night. We were busy preparing for a special event. I went to grab the last flowers and that's when we met.

He was looking at the flowers longingly. "They're pretty, aren't they," I said.

"Yes" was all he said and with a sad face turned to leave.

"Wait", I said, grabbing the pot. "Here take it". He hesitated before quickly taking them and leaving.

The next day, I was in front of our church and I saw them. The flowers next to a gargoyle. It felt like it was looking at me.

"I Miss You"

by **Alex Morohl**

Word Count: 101

Dear Master,

I am writing again to report on my condition. I fear it is terminal. I find myself staring out the window hoping to catch a glimpse of mother. I remember her fond kisses well. Auntie came to visit the other day, only briefly to feed me, and not as much as she used to. Tells me it's your fault, but I don't see how that could be? I miss you, remember when we cuddled close and you smelled my hair. I miss you. I don't know where you have gone, but I miss you.

Signed,

A Potted Plant

"Seasonal"

by **Emilie S Peck**

Word Count: 101

His bright bloom held life's light, freshly revealed from a tender green infancy. He stretched for the sky.

Butterflies tickled him, only to move on moments later.

As days passed, his prideful petals fell. He grew heavy.

So heavy.

[cont.]

Other Entries (cont.)

Brilliant sunlight grew further away.

His sweet scent dimmed with his colors, and he grew weaker with each night. Gradually, he fell, fell, fell, and despaired as the last of his light failed.

The sun watched as the last beauty of his colors faded into brown.

Winter came and went.

Soon, a tender green bud poked through the earth.

He lived again.

"The Reaping"

by Royce Roberts

Word Count: 98

"Tom," a sweet voice beckons. A young boy perks his ears.

"Mrs. Tiegs!" he yells bounding through the verdant yard.

"I baked your favorite today," she coos to him. His eyes light up. She removes an oblong device, "Let's do this now before we forget." His saddens. He stretches his index finger placing it on one end of the device. In a blink, his finger bleeds. "And a little for Clarence," as she wipes the remaining blood on a flower of a potted plant. Her face contorts. In an instance she disappears.

That is how the reaping began.

End of entries for "Iron Pen" 2014.

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