

Fantasy and Sci-Fi Inspired Flash Fictions

by John Currivan

To The Clouds (2015)

This is how it happened one night.

Out of nowhere, all the young people's phones floated up to head height and powered themselves to life. They woke their owners with blipping tones and flashing screens. Hypnotised and amazed, the young people followed them. Out of rooms, down stairs', through doors and onto streets. Hords of young people crowded the roads, each child following the tone and flash of the phone they knew was theirs.

They saw each other and played together, laughing as they walked, "What is this?" they asked, "Where are they going?" they wondered. "Sooo coooool!" they agreed. The phones travelled, sloping up and down like waves, turning into and out of each other like murmuring starlings, each one dragging live cargo behind them.

They crossed the limits of towns and cities into forests and up mountains, to a point where the land and sky were clear.

There the hovering mobiles dropped the invisible cords from the children. Then as if caught in a swirling magnet, the devices came together, each phone acting like a single brick, collectively forming giant structures; pyramids, columns, towering curved walls, every camera pointing out to where the surrounding youths were.

Suddenly the lights started flickering and the cameras started clicking. The children laughed and smiled, pouting and posing and cheering like this was one big party. All the while the cameras captured their images and in the same instant uploaded them to the clouds. On and on it went. Then on and on some more.

Gradually the children's excitement subsided. Their eyes began to spread wider, their jaws began to slacken, their bodies grew tired and heavy until they stood still, not speaking a single word between them.

As suddenly as it had started, the flashing stopped. Silence filled the air. Nothing moved but the slow wind and the dispersing clouds above.

In an instant they all fell to the earth, phones and people, dropped by a massive unseen hand. They lay there throughout the night and on past dawn.

In the morning confused and worried adults saw the CCTV footage and followed the trails to where the young people were. They found nothing but cracked screens and vegetative children, breathing and alive but all unresponsive, their souls sucked out through their eyes.

The only ones left to tell them what had happened were the lame and the blind. The ones who tried to follow but couldn't and the ones who were led by the sounds, but who never saw the flashing lights and so were left behind.

That is how it happened, one night.

The Water Rose (2014)

The lady lay lithe and waiting, a cold hard stone bed pressing into the mountain range of her spine. One hand holding the cloth of her dress just above her knee. The other hand twisting in the air, fingers fondling the imaginary field of beard on the face of her absent lover, her hero, her warrior.

A kiss long since given, still lingering and tingling on her lips, the tiny invisible hairs, beneath the nose standing on edge.

“I will return and kiss those lips again, no matter what. No matter what.”

And she wouldn't move until then.

She felt the silk fabric around, weighed down by the wet of the growing flood.

Her extremities slowly colder, icing over, spreading out, moving like a glacier. Joint to joint. Freezing muscles, tightening tendons.

By her bed, on a hardwood table, a dead flower's head cracked off a wilted petal, dropping it gently to the water's surface, an empty boat, veined organic and floating along. The petal bounced off her cheek.

The water was at her mouth and nose.

Still the lady lay lithe and waiting and the water rose around her.

The Holy Man who loved her, hung pensive at her door, leaning heavily against the portal's frame. His hollow cavern ear pressed closely to the wood, listening, hearing, focussed on the slow flow, in out of her breathing.

“Is she still... is she still...is she still... alive?”

She was.

His own chest exhaled its breath relaxing with a little sigh.

Clasped in the grasp of a white knuckled fist he holds the graven statue of the Christ, his saviour, salvation and absolver. The messiah whose service he has sworn into, but the devotion to whom, could not stop the affection of his heart for the lady.

The river of flood trickled at first through his toes but now well above his knees it soaks the belt of rope that holds his robe, tied about his side.

“Leave me.” she said “I will follow shortly.”

But she didn't, and the Holy Man wouldn't go, and they both alone remained.

His love for her, his lust for her, constantly denied even though his loins often throbbed and hummed with desire.

The cold now at his waist, the crucifix is pulled up from, and drips its drops like sin back to, the gathering water surrounding him.

He listened at the door again but heard nothing. No sigh, nor sign of breath from the lady.

Panic, shock and shuddering fear set in.

And the Holy Man who loved her hammered heavily at the door, bashing, battering, beating it to no avail.

The empty hollow castle corridors echoed, ringing with the sound of flesh and bone on hardened wood, screams of pain, mourning loss and an infinity of failed promises and names now forgotten.

Hallways, where once was heard the steps of the many feet of busy and bustling people, moving to and fro, had also reverberated the laughter of men, women, kings, queens and commoners.

These empty halls had heard and still held many secrets.

But the soaked sinking stone bricks now only shared the shouting of the Holy Man.

Until he shouted no more, but sobbed.

They shared his sobs, until he sobbed no more.

And silence settled over the flooding stones.

The windows of the walls look out onto the world.

A town in a valley, behind which lies a mountain, behind which one could find faraway lands, forests, cliffs, safe from the rising tide.

Somewhere out there is a field, once filled with battle and gore, families fighting for fame and glory. Fields, where maybe a hero fell, a warrior that was once a lady's lover who promised to return. A field where flowers now grow; green, blue, scarlet and crimson. Living flowers, stretching, sprouting from the hollow skulls of fallen soldiers.

The empty hollow castle, in the low valley stood mighty, majestic, magnificent and wonderful, looking out at the rest of the earth and slowly the water rose around it.

Nobody knows now what lies beneath the surface of the lake of the low valley.

The once bustling castle and its surrounding town, disremembered forever.

Nothing moves between the houses but sunlight and gently swimming fish .

Yet still the lady lies lithe and waiting. The Holy Man who loved her, hovering by her door.
Both quiet now, no longer struggling. Intact and undecayed in the fresh clean dark peaceful water.

Just above the still surface, flits a blue butterfly, fluttering and skittering along the crests of miniature waves on the shimmering bloated lake. The water reacting with each tiny flap of its veined silk wings, rippling out, across and down.

Down, maybe to the majestic wondrous world below, that once stood proud and mighty, but now lies smothered and silent.

And The Earth Did Eat Itself (2016)

The fat man told us we were hungry and though our stomachs were full, we believed him. He swore that our shelters and defences were crumbling and although our roofs still stopped the rain and our walls held back the wind, we believed him. He promised us that we had oppressors and vowed to break our chains and although we knew that we spoke freely and that slavery and servitude were industries that we owned and controlled, we believed him.

Our stomachs grumbled, our skin felt chill and our wrists wore red and raw in our minds.

It was fairly done then. The democratic decision, systematically made. Each one of us used our voice and voted for a change.

We were still the ones with all the power, yet we sought to take it back, even though it was clear that balance and equality had only managed to claw some crumbs and scraps.

The others, other people, had been told the same, by other fat men with similar claims, and we dug our borders deeper. Great walls were built and weapons were made, and with fiery hearts we gloriously reclaimed ground we'd never lost.

We trembled, each of us in our lands, suspicious of approaching alien dangers, like demented men patrolling their porches, over-armed and under-trained, ready to shoot stray bullets before questions are even thought of.

Yet for a time, as brief as a blink there was a peace. A cold and silent peace like the eye of a still forming storm, through which with foaming mouths and bared fangs we formed battle lines and barricades, primed and pared, ready to sprint at the slightest signal.

It came. A flickering spark in darkness, setting continents of gunpowder aflame.

The truly shelterless and starving were the first to go.

The poor screamed in seas of fire.

Our borders like our bellies swelled and contracted, feeding off the war we started.

For we believed the fat man who said we were oppressed, enslaved and crumbling.

We felt the hunger he told us we had.

We followed that hunger to where it led

And the earth did eat itself.

Parallel Lies (2013)

I only really told one lie.

OK, that's a lie, but lying is easy for me. All you have to do is say it like it's true. Sounds simple, but some people really struggle with it. They look away or scratch their heads and that totally shows that they're lying. The worst is when they try too hard to look honest and say something like it's really sincere. If it seems like you really really really mean it then people get suspicious. If you want people to believe your lies then you've got to stay cool and state it like it's just a fact.

"I didn't eat the cookies."

"I left my homework book in school."

"I'm adopted and my parents are six-armed space alien spies from another universe, here on a mission to study and invade the planet Earth, so you better watch out or they'll melt you with their laser guns."

OK. That last one was a few lies piled up together but that happens sometimes. One lie leads to another and they get bigger and bigger. Besides, Stephanie is so gullible anyway, I just wanted to see how far that last one would go.

She didn't believe me at first, but, if you say the lie over and over and over it stops being funny, it starts to sound true.

But it all went wrong on our first sleepover in my house, she tried to catch me out.

"Emily, Emily! Get up."

It was three in the morning. Stephanie was shining a torch into my eyes.

"Let's play detectives! I'm gonna prove your parents aren't aliens."

"How?"

"We'll investigate! I bet we're not gonna find any alien things in the whole house"

I could've explained to her that, 'Of course we won't, they don't just leave things lying around', but I thought it would be more fun to join in and pretend.

We searched the shelves in the living room, the boxes in the garage, the cupboards in the kitchen.

"What's this door?" she asked in the hallway.

"The basement. That's where Daddy has his office. He says I should never go down there."

"Are you scared?" she replied.

She was smiling, as if she had beaten me at last. I didn't like that smile.

"You first." I answered.

We crept down the sneaky stairs to the basement but there was nothing there, just books, folders, paper, his computer, framed photos of me and Mammy.

Then Stephanie tried one of the drawers in his desk. It was locked, but after searching on top of the desk she found a small key.

"Stop it!" I whispered. "That must be where his important work stuff is, if we're caught..."

But she had already opened the drawer.

It was more nothing, cables, wires, memory sticks... but then she pulled out this thing it was like... what's it called again... a toy puzzle, with coloured squares? A Rubiks cube, it was like that except it was circular like a tube. There were loads of shapes carved in it, symbols, like letters from a foreign country.

Then we heard footsteps!

"Quick, Steph put it back, Daddy's coming."

"But what is this?"

"I don't care just..."

I grabbed it. As soon as I touched the tube, it started ticking and whizzing like a zipper zipping up an everlasting zip.

The lights went out. I thought we'd been hit by a tornado. Wind was whipping around us, blowing my hair like we were on a rollercoaster except... we weren't moving.

When the wind stopped I re-opened my eyes. The air around me was red and purple.

We were on a hill overlooking some blue trees with swirling branches, spread out in a yellow and pink grass field. Above the trees I saw that there were three suns in the sky, all a different colour.

Steph was gawping at me.

"Ha! I thought you were trying to trick me this whole time! Your parents really are aliens. Oh my God! Emily, this is amazing! Come on, let's explore".

We walked down the hill, towards the swirling trees. I said nothing, just tried to pretend that I'd been here a million times before, but really I was freaking out. I had never seen any of this before. I had no idea that my parents had, and suddenly I didn't even really know who

my parents were. They had tricked me, they had been lying to me this whole time. So, it turned out that I was actually telling Stephanie the truth this whole time.

Then Stephanie pointed to the tube thing in my hand and said.

“You know how to get us back to Earth, don’t you?”

I looked at the tube, then back to her.

“Eh... Duh!! Of course I do.”

So really... I only told her one lie.