

WISPER

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Writing Credits

Cap'n Swashbuckle

Marie Starsmith

Aurea Rosa

Orca Delphinidae



Illustration/Photography Credits

HMS

St4rs

Tad Merovich

Anonymous

Miss Sharp

Mason Page

Aurea Rosa



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Jack--Lantern Epitaph

Here lies a
Faithful Jack-O-Lantern
Harvested on the twentyfirst
Carved on the twentyninth
Illuminated on the thirtyfirst
Decayed by the fifth.
O fleeting grin
Of flickering brightness
Set in a face of orange
Rest here in peace
In the compost pile
Moldy
Rotten
Gnawed by squirrels
But not forgotten.



By Aurea Rosa

Ghoulish Gourmet

There once was a silly young skeleton
Who loved to eat plates of Beef Wellington.
But with every bite more,
Food would flop on the floor,
So his mom said, “Next time, hold the gelatin!”

By Cap'n Swashbuckle

The Footsteps of Fall

All so beneath the maple trees: air cooling the sunset leaves,
Under shade and shadows cold, grass burned a blinding gold,
Towards the town, the frosted tracks lead down, crisp and quiet.
Unceasing. Dancing. Prancing. Leaving behind a colorful riot.
Much starts to wither, dry up, rot. Faded, and yet, forgotten not.
None defy this siren's call. Follow Winter's herald: o brilliant Fall!



By Marie Starsmith

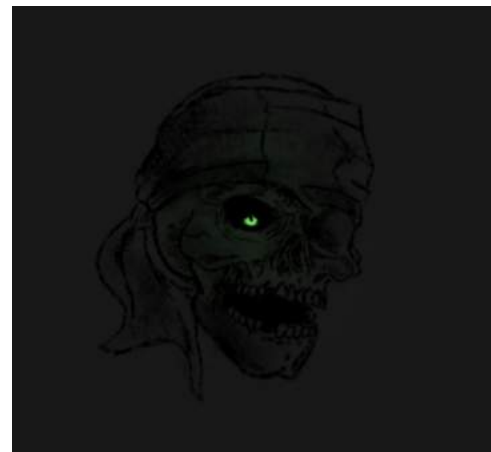
A Man Journeys Home on Halloween

On Halloween a man walked down a lane
As he struggled with the long journey home;
Walking made him feel great deal of pain
Because his leg had been stabbed by a gnome.

He did not see the pumpkin on the ground;
He tripped over it and fell on his face;
As he lie there, he was picked up and bound;
By pirates captained by Skeleton-face.

He was forced to walk the plank off their boat;
As he fell, he was picked up by a hawk;
The hawk said to him: "I thought you were a goat!"
It took him home, and he looked at the clock.

Twelve o'clock was the time when he got home;
Halloween was gone and so was the gnome.



By Orca Delphinidae

The Magician

I was on a train. I saw a man who was dressed like a magician and asked him, “Are you a magician?”

“Yes,” answered the magician.

“Will you do a magic trick?”

“Yes.”

“What will you do?”

“I will make money appear out of my hat,” the magician said. He reached into his hat. “Close your eyes.” I closed my eyes. “Open your eyes.” I opened my eyes and saw that the magician was holding some money. “Here is ten dollars!” He put the money back in his hat.

“Can I keep the ten dollars?” I asked.

“No,” the magician answered. I went and sat down in my seat.

A few minutes later a man came up to me. “Do you want to buy a watermelon? They are 90% off. It is now only ten dollars.”

“I will take one,” I said. When I tried to pay for it I noticed that my wallet was gone, which was bad because I had ten dollars in it and now I could not pay for the watermelon. I looked and saw the magician. When he saw me he ran away as fast as he could. I told the watermelon man, “I’m going to get some money. Stay right here.”

I ran after the magician.

When I caught up to him, he still wouldn’t stop running, so I stopped him by grabbing him. I asked, “Can I have some money? I can’t find my wallet anywhere, and I need to buy a watermelon.”

“I don’t have any money,” the magician said.

“What about the money in your hat?” I asked.

“I don’t have any money in my hat.”

“Yes you do,” I said. I quickly grabbed his hat off his head and looked inside. There was no money. “Where is the ten dollars?” I asked.

“A magician never reveals his secrets,” the magician said.

“How can I buy the watermelon?” I asked.

The magician grabbed his hat from me. He reached inside and pulled out a watermelon. “Sell this for ten dollars,” he said. “Then you will have enough money.”

I took the watermelon. The magician pulled a fat white rabbit out of his hat. The rabbit was dressed the same as the magician. “Hi,” the rabbit said. “Can I

buy your watermelon? I will give you ten dollars.” The rabbit pulled ten dollars out of his pocket. I sold the watermelon to the rabbit, then went back to the man who was selling me the watermelon.

“I have ten dollars,” I said. I bought the watermelon from the man.

When the train ride was done I left the train and went to find something to eat. I had no money. The rabbit said, “You can sell my watermelon and buy a knife to cut your watermelon with.” I ran into the watermelon man. “Will you buy this watermelon?” I asked him.

“Okay.” He pulled out my wallet and gave me ten dollars for the watermelon.

“That’s my wallet,” I said.

“No it’s not. The magician gave it to me when I sold him a watermelon.”

He sold me the watermelon. The rabbit and I left and bought a knife, then we found a place to eat. I cut the watermelon and we ate it.

The Monkey's Meal

Every day I watch the chef make my food through the window to the kitchen. I am a monkey, and I live in the Eymonksburg Zoo. Today as I watched the chef, I noticed that something seemed off. A chill ran down my spine. I didn't see anything weird. The chef was just pouring "Monkey Poison" onto my fish sandwich. The chef makes me fish sandwiches every day. I do not know what poison means, but it looked like it tasted better than the sandwiches I usually ate that didn't have it.

I continued searching for the thing that seemed off. I realized that there was a peculiar smell coming from the kitchen, but I could barely smell it because of the thick window between me and the kitchen. My heart was throbbing and my hair stood on end. The worst part of it was that I did not know why I felt frightened.

When my food was brought in, I perceived that the smell was coming from the "Monkey Poison" that the sandwich was covered in. Just like every other meal, it was a fish sandwich, which is two slices of bread with a small lump of fish in the middle. This time it had "Monkey Poison" on it. The smell of it was so sweet that I did not know whether I should eat it or not. I remembered being frightened by the smell, and not knowing why. I decided that I must have only been afraid because I had never smelled it before, and not because there was anything wrong. Everything else I had ever eaten tasted so bad, and this was so different, so I decided that it must be good.

I took a bite out of the sandwich.



The Chase

“Get back here!” yelled the clown who was running after me with a sword. I pushed through crowds of people, trying to get away.

I had no clue why he was chasing me. I had been going on a cruise, but as soon as I had gotten on the boat a man dressed like a clown ran towards me with a sword yelling for me to stop something. I ran away as fast as I could.

“You know what you did!” he yelled. I did not know what I did.

I came to the edge of the boat. There was no way to go except into the water. I jumped into the water. The clown looked down at me. He suddenly threw his sword at me. The sword missed me and smashed a small boat nearby. I climbed on the side of the boat.

The clown jumped in the water and swam after me. I found the captain of the boat and said, “This crazy clown is chasing me! Please take me back to the city with you!”

“You can stay on the boat if you pay me,” he replied. We went the short distance to land, with the clown swimming behind us the whole way. The clown was somehow swimming as fast as the boat. I jumped off of the boat as soon as I could because the clown was right behind me.

I ran through the streets. I looked for a place to hide and climbed inside of a garbage can. I stayed there for about ten minutes. I came out because I thought that the clown would be gone by then. I did not see the clown anywhere, but a giant dog was staring at me. He seemed angry. He suddenly attacked me. I ran away.

I climbed onto the roof of a school to get away from the dog. He could not climb, so he stood on the ground, barking at me. I found the door to get inside the school. I picked the lock and went in.

I walked through the halls and looked for an exit. There were calculators and math problems covering the floor in the hallway. I searched my memory but could not remember a time when school was like that.

I left through a door that was far away from the dog. I ran away fast because I did not want the dog to catch up to me. A policeman standing outside the school yelled, “There he is!” He started chasing me. As I ran through the streets of the town, I spotted a banana lying in the middle of the road. I picked it up, ate the banana, and threw the peel at the policeman. He ran right past it and did not even seem to notice it. Now he was even closer to me.

“I am the police. Stop running from me. You know what you did!” I still did not know.

I ran into a construction site. They were building a gas station. I ran through it. I got the idea that I could get into a truck and drive away. I climbed into the front of one, and inside was the clown who had been chasing me earlier.

“You! You will get locked in a cell for what you did!” he said. I flipped a switch and the window opened. I shoved him out of the window, then closed it. I drove away. The clown climbed into a different truck and chased me. Behind him the policeman was in his police car and was also chasing me. Behind him the dog was in his car chasing me.

I drove out of the city and into a forest. My truck crashed into a tree. I climbed out. The clown crashed into my truck. He climbed out and chased me. I ran into a bear. “Eat that clown.” I told the bear.

The bear ate the clown. I ran far into the forest. The policeman caught up to me.

“What do you want?” I asked.

“You are under arrest!”

“For what?”

“Breaking into the school!”

“That was an accident. I was being chased by a giant dog.”

“What dog?” The dog ran up and knocked the policeman over. I ran away, and the dog ran after me.

“What do you want?” I asked the dog. The dog jumped on me. I was afraid to move. He dug through my pockets and pulled out a bone. He ran away.

The policeman was lying on the ground. “Do you want a bone too?” I asked, but he didn’t respond. He was trembling with fear.

“I-I will let you go if you promise not to let the dog hu-hurt me again.”

I made the promise to him and left. Not wanting to commit any more crimes, I walked the long distance to the city, and went to my house.

That night as I was lying in my bed the ghost of the clown came to me. He said, “I want to apologize for the inconvenience. I had thought you were the man who burned down my house and stole everything I owned, but it turns out it was somebody else. Please forgive me for my mistake.”

“If I say I forgive you, will you leave me alone?”

“Sure.”

“I forgive you,” I said. The ghost clown flew away, leaving me alone in the dark bedroom.

Autumn Leaves Pantoum

Fire dancing in the sky
Leaves of red and orange and yellow
Twirling, dancing, flying
Following the breeze

Leaves of red and orange and yellow
Painted by the hand of Autumn
Following the breeze
Colorful leaves

Painted by the hand of Autumn
Twirling, dancing, flying
Colorful leaves
Fire dancing in the sky



By Aurea Rosa

Sidetracked Drac

There once was a spooky vampire,
Whose situation was quite dire.
He was out having fun,
When, lo, up rose the sun,
And said he, “Bleh! My skin is on fire!”



By Cap'n Swashbuckle

A Cosmic Tail of Magic

“FweeEEEEEE!”

The whistle blew, and with a sudden lurch forward, the Starlight Express rumbled out of the station. Rusty, the conductor, took a look at his watch, noted the time in his logbook as 12 AM, and wagged his tail.

“Another Tuesday, another successful expedition” he woofed. “We should be pulling back into the Milky Way Station by daybreak.”

Suddenly, a scream rang out through the cabin. Rusty’s usually-floppy ears stood alert. He rushed to the dining car, which was seemingly the source of the commotion. As the cabin door swung open, Rusty was met with billows of black smoke. The passengers he could make out were coughing violently, others were obscured by the cloudy barrage. He strained his sharp Greyhound eyes at a figure emerging from the murk.

“And for my next trick,” a voice boomed, “I will change the course of an entire passenger train using only my mind!”

“What in blazes...” Rusty growled.

“Nothing up my sleeves...” As the smoke settled, a tan cocker spaniel dressed in a bedazzled tuxedo addressed the cabin with a wave of her paw. “And, presto! Take a look around folks, and welcome to our next stop, the Island of 1,000 fire hydrants!”

The passengers looked out the windows in wonder. The starry sky had disappeared, and the train was now careening through a brightly lit city. Dozens of shiny red hydrants dotted the landscape, crowding every street corner.

“Ah, this is one of my favorite vacation spots!” said the spaniel, sniffing the air excitedly. “Please, hold your applause. I’ll be available for autographs and photos as you exit the train.”

Rusty sidled up to the pooch prestidigitator and tapped her on the shoulder.

“Excuse me my dear, but if you’ll indulge a query from the peanut gallery; are you nutty, batty, or just insane?”

“A magician never reveals her secrets!” she replied with a smile.

“Well, I see a lot of wackos in this job, and I’ve got to say you take the cake. But in ten years I’ve never been late to our home galaxy a single night, and I’m not about to let that change now.”

He lunged towards the magician, but she was gone in a flash. A cloud of sequins fluttered to the ground where she had been standing.

“Consarn it!” Rusty growled. It was only then he noticed the elegant black borzoi in the adjacent booth, ruffling the pages of the paper she’d been calmly reading.

“You know,” said the borzoi, “if you’re going to get the better of that pretentious fool, you’ll have to know her weakness. She’s a Flea Mage, from the Whisker tribe. I can tell by her distinctive collar. If you can get her to say her name while you pronounce it backwards, you can negate any of her spells.”

“Ah, the Whisker tribe. I’ve dealt with those rascals before. But, the cur never revealed her name!”

“I suppose she prefers to preserve some amount of mystique,” replied the borzoi.

“Well, I’m much obliged, ma’am. I’ll have this situation sorted in a jiffy.”

“No rush!” said the borzoi, “I could use a bit of sunshine, and you must admit the scenery on this island is breathtaking.”

Rusty tipped his conductor cap and retreated to the engine room, scratching behind his ear thoughtfully.

“Backwards name, eh?” he said to himself. “What sort of name would befit such a gaudy character?”

As he paced in front of the boiler, he felt something small stuck to his paw. Reaching down, he could see it glint in the light of the flickering coal fire.

“Aha!” he shouted. He knelt on all fours and shook, as if after coming in from the rain. A few more specks of glitter settled around him on the train car’s floor.

“It’s not much to go on, but in ten years of conducting, my gut hasn’t failed me yet.”

He traipsed up and down the entire length of the train twice over, pausing intermittently to sniff the air and gawk at the shiny red scenery. Only on the third go-round did he finally trace the culprit, who had gathered a crowd within the caboose. The yowl of a cat could be heard above the noise of sawing wood.

“Have no fear, ladies and gentlemen. For with the power of my magic box, I will be able to rejoin the kitty completely unharmed! Probably.”

“Fantastic!” barked Rusty over the crowd. “I’ll admit I was a skeptic at first, but now I can see, you truly are a marvel!”

“Is that so?” the magician replied. “Such a rapid change of heart, my fogley friend. For what can I attribute such kind praise?”

“I know old-fashioned showmanship when I see it, and you’ve got the knack. You know, the Starlight makes a bi-monthly stop to Planet Hollywood

along its travels. If I were you I'd save the date! I have a friend in show business I could even introduce you to."

"Humph! I'm already famous, but I suppose there may be some corners of the galaxy who haven't yet heard my name," she replied, casually handling the top of the magic box as the cat's upper half hissed.

"And what name would that be? I could call tonight and arrange a meeting."

The spaniel struck a triumphant pose, holding the hapless kitty above her head.

"Why, the magnificent-"

"-Selkraps!" Rusty snarled. A look of shock eclipsed the magician's face.

"Jinx! You owe me a milkbone!" laughed Rusty, as the sunny sky dissolved into familiar stars and planets. With the box having disappeared, Fluffy's newly rejoined top and bottom halves descended upon the magnificent Sparkles' face, scratching wildly.

"Aiiieeee!" Sparkles howled, trying to claw her face free from the barrage of slashes. "How did you know my weakness?"

"A conductor never reveals his secrets!" chuckled Rusty, noting the time as 12:15 on the dot as the train rolled into Milky Way Station.

Bloody Irritating

There once was a little brown bat.
Upside down on an oak tree he sat.
But he then felt, with dread,
The blood rush to his head,
And said he, "How annoying is that?"

By Cap'n Swashbuckle

Pigeon on Fire

“Rachel, wait up!” my younger sister Emma called, chasing after me.

Glancing back at my sister, I saw that she was struggling to lift her massive cello case. It’s bigger than her, I thought, but that’s not saying much. Emma was seven years old and quite short for her age.

Spinning around, I followed the leaf-dappled sidewalk back to her side. “You shouldn’t have chosen the cello.”

“I can handle it,” she retorted, glaring at me. Jerking at the handle of her cello case, Emma managed to make it fall forward. A horrible twanging sound came from inside the case.

“Emma—” I sighed.

“I. Can. HANDLE IT!” my sister screamed, shoving the cello case forward. The rough cement of the sidewalk tore at the black leather, producing a cringe-worthy scraping sound.

“Fine, it’s up to you,” I said casually, starting to walk away, “but don’t blame me if you’re late to school.”

Scrrrraaape. Scrape. Scrape. Scrrrraaape. “Don’t leave me!”

“Just let me carry it!”

“No!” *Sccccrrrrrraaaape.*

“Then I’m walking to school by myself.”

“NO!” *Scr-scr-scrape.*

“What else am I supposed to do?!”

“I—” *Scrape.* “Don’t—” *Scrape.* “Know!” *Scrrraape.*

Sinking to the ground, I cradled my head in my hands. Why is Emma so stubborn? I thought, frustrated.

Serr— Suddenly Emma gasped. “A phoenix!”

I looked up just in time to see Emma running after a burning pigeon. Her cello case lay on the sidewalk, temporarily neglected.

Jumping to my feet, I shouted, “Emma! Come back here!”

Emma didn’t seem to hear a single word. She only ran faster and faster, towards the fiery bird. She’s going to get burned, I thought. The possibility was all too real. My frustration vanished, replaced with fear.

“Stay away from that thing!” I yelled desperately. The pigeon turned its beady eyes towards me and tilted its head. For a moment, its flames soared higher, then died down.

I glanced down at the abandoned cello in its scraped case, then at my sister. “Emma!” I cried, one last time, then lifted the heavy instrument above my head. Squeezing my eyes shut, I threw the cello at the pigeon.

The cello case crashed down on the pigeon, and it let out a loud squawk. Feathers flew, and Emma stopped. Turning her gaze towards me, Emma let her eyes fill with betrayed tears. “You killed him! You killed the phoenix!”

“It was already going to die!” I told her, but my eyes strayed to the smashed cello. A small flame burned atop the pile, growing larger by the second. “Get away from it before you get hurt!”

Emma took a step back. “My cello,” she grumbled.

Staring into the crackling fire, I saw something moving in the midst of the flames. *What is that thing?* I thought, squinting.

The figure formed the shape of a baby chick. “What?” I said out loud, watching the fiery bird flapping its wings.

Peering into the blaze, Emma let her eyes widen. “A baby phoenix! Rachel, he's still alive!” Rushing forward, she reached into the fire.

I screamed, but Emma only smiled. Withdrawing her hand, she showed me the fluffy gray chick in her palm. It peeped happily and promptly burst into flames.

“Phoenixes don’t burn people they like. Cello likes me.” Emma said proudly, stroking the flaming chick.

Trying multiple times to reclaim my voice, I finally managed to ask, “Cello?”

“That’s what his name is. He told me,” my younger sister said with a bright smile.

“Seriously?” I shook my head. Why was I surprised anymore? “This is going to be **very** hard to explain.”



Black Cat

Midnight strolled along the path, leaves crunching under his paws. A faint breeze stirred his black fur, bringing with it the faint scent of cinnamon and pumpkin. Gracefully leaping onto a short wall, the cat followed the aroma to an open window. Inside, a human female with fluffy white fur slid a dish out of a hot metal box. Tasting the air, Midnight closed his eyes in satisfaction. He had to get a taste of whatever that was! Tensing, the black cat leaped through the window.

His paws landed on a cold, hard rectangle; his claws scrabbled at the slick surface but couldn't grip it. Yowling in frustration, Midnight launched himself off of the counter. At the last moment, he realized that he had miscalculated his leap. The black cat crashed into the human's poofy white hair.

A horrible, high-pitched sound came from the white-furred person, and the dish dropped to the floor. Jumping down to the ground beside the aromatic food, Midnight cautiously licked its smooth surface. A wonderfully warm, overpowering flavor filled the cat's mouth. Contentment filled him, and a purr rumbled in his chest.

Gripping a long pole with straw tied to the end, the human charged at Midnight. His eyes grew wide, and he bolted. Swerving around corners and ducking under furniture, the black cat barely evaded each swing of the weaponized pole. Circling back to the open window, he sprang onto the smooth surface and then out of the furious human's nest. Landing lightly on the wall, Midnight hopped down onto the grass.

Scanning his surroundings, the black cat noted a pair of golden-haired humans following the leaf-covered path. They didn't appear to have a straw-pole, and their babble didn't seem threatening. Midnight pranced across the path in front of them. Suddenly, the humans' timid eyes grew wide, and their talk grew louder. Tilting his head, the black cat stepped closer. One of the golden-furred humans let out a sound similar to the cry of the white-furred person.

Midnight watched, confused, as the humans turned and fled. What was wrong with them?



By Aurea Rosa

Rumbling and Crumbling

There once was a crusty old mummy
Beset with a rumbling tummy.
So he lurched through the streets
Seeking trick-or-treat eats
He had plenty of worms, but none gummy.



By Cap'n Swashbuckle

Apples Are Treasures

It seems
a piece of golden apple
is better than gold
to the birds.
Gold is but a hunk of metal
apples are treasures.
For who would feast
on a meal of gold?
What bird
would sing
for love of money?
Let the gold lie
in the storehouses of the rich.
We know
it is best
to have our apple trees.



By Aurea Rosa

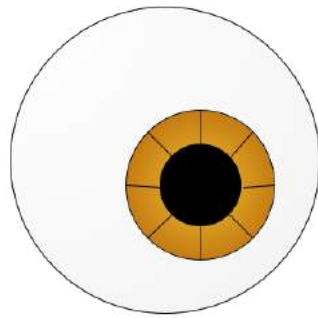
All Hallow's Eve

All Hallow's Eve, Halloween; boundaries grow thin...
With ghosts and ghouls, the physical rules get broken.
Betwixt the mist and moonlight's glare,
Skeleton leaves and cold nightmare;
Black shadows turn to flesh and bone,
Skin does crawl, and muscle does groan,
And blood starts to run cold...

With Jack's wide smile, lanterned smile, glowing in the night,
Welcoming Them, beckoning us into Their sight!
Keep 'way from dark and dusty Grimm!
Block out his banshee breth'eren!
Heed not the siren's call tonight,
And chase no fading faerie lights!
Lest doom befall us all...

Don these masks, and dare not ask who is your friend or foe,
For revelation brings condemnation; 'tis better not to know.
So tread your wand'ring way on now,
Happily hidden, toe to brow.
Taste your tribute, and think no more,
Of masquerade or haunted lore;
And be content with death.

By Marie Starsmith



**Keep an eyeball out
for our next
collection of writings!**

Book binded by bone,
An inky poetry tome:
Wrought of rhyme unknown.



A vibrant collection of short stories and poetry, inked by the dedicated and the mindful, whose words will take you across time and space for your enjoyment. Take a short break to dive into these tall tales and spooky stories, or even a few haunting haikus, to remind you that, in the midst of this fantastic fall, Halloween is soon approaching. We hope you enjoy!