

# Scryptic's First Annual Halloween Contest Results

October 31, 2017



## **A Note From The Editors**

Welcome to our First Annual Halloween Contest results! We would like to personally thank each and every one of you who submitted your work to us. Without you, absolutely none of this would be possible. Not only were we pleasantly surprised by the number of submissions we received, we were also extremely pleased in the range of material on the topic of Halloween. We had an incredible time reading through all of the submissions. We laughed, we cried, and a few pieces had us really creeped out. Bravo to you!

I know that Chase and I had different expectations for what we were looking for and seeing as how you all took the risk of submitting your work and not knowing what we were after, I have to thank you for trusting our judgment. Halloween is all about scary monsters! For me personally, I love looking for the real-life monsters. The people you meet really influence your life and who you become. All it takes is meeting one wrong person and they can turn your reality into a nightmare. Chase, on the other hand, loves the paranormal side of Halloween – ghosts, witches, and everything in between. With that being said, you guys most certainly did not make it easy on us! Chase and I had a difficult time choosing between specific pieces and after hours of discussion, decided we would each do a “judge’s pick”, or honorable mention if you will, in both categories. I truly believe the winners we selected give you the perfect balance of exactly what we were both looking for.

We hope you enjoy this as much as we did. Have a fantastically ghoulish Halloween!

-Lori A Minor and Chase Gagnon

First Place- Textual Art  
Tim Gardiner

**The Haunted Mere**

Tonight is perfect for a midnight stroll, sickle moon rising in an ephemeral sky. Our favourite walk to the mere is often frequented by glow-worms, their lanterns swaying on the dewy grass. But none can be found; the path is strangely dull for once, only a faint white glow among the reeds attracts our attention. As we crouch transfixed, a young girl rises from the mere arms pointing skyward, imploring the cool air for mercy. She hovers above the lilies for a few minutes, before tilting her head toward us, smile creeping across a fast-aging face.

lighting up nearby  
the first glow-worm  
of the night...  
the spectre from our past  
sinks beneath the water

As Chase I and read through the contest entries we received, this piece really caught our attention. The first line is incredibly alluring and sets up a beautiful, yet eerie scene and lays out an image before your own eyes. You can see, feel, and hear what Tim paints with such a well crafted hand. There is a brilliancy in using “lanterns” to describe the glow-worm’s tail as it suggest that the “lanterns” and moon are the only light sources illuminating their nightly stroll down a dark path. Once Tim introduces the “faint white glow”, a powerful sense of distress is established as you can’t help but be curious as to what it is. The image of a young girl always brings innocence, so you can feel a bit of relief before realizing that she is of the supernatural world. It’s like the calm before the storm. Seeing this young girl in my head, hovering over delicate flowers like lilies, is insanely contrasting and I love it! Using “creepy” to describe her smile is, once again, perfect word choice as it strips away all delicacy and innocence of the child before rapidly aging, such as it would be lost as all women age.

The tanka ties in so lovely with the prose as we’re back to the beauty in it all before being reminded that with age comes hardships. However, we can sink the ghosts of our pasts and just keep on living.

-Lori A Minor

## Second Place- Textual Art

Marion Clarke

### Rejuvenation Spell

You may only need to travel as far as the nearest churchyard to find a yew tree, as they are long-term residents of many cemeteries. Little grows under the dark evergreen, with its needle-like leaves and brown, scaly bark. But beware, every part of the tree is poisonous, apart from the flesh of its berries and even these encase a deadly seed.

scythe moon  
we die as we begin  
to live

If you dig beneath the tree's canopy, not too far from the trunk, you will hit the root system. Use your fingers to clear away earth from the net of tough, membranous tendrils. You will soon find them, trapped in this web, the roots grown through their eyes so they cannot see back to the land of the living. The dead have fed the yew. In time, the centre of the trunk will decay and a new tree will sprout from within the hollow.

silvered  
in the moon's eclipse \*  
this new dawn

\* First two lines from the witches in Shakespeare's play, Macbeth

As a Wiccan and thespian, I can most certainly say this was one of my favorite pieces we received! If you're familiar with Shakespeare's Macbeth, you'll notice the correlation between text from the play and Clarke's insanely powerful haibun. Not only did she take a sliver of a line from the witches and create a beautiful haiku to end on, she took one word from Shakespeare's text and ran with it to build completely original prose of her own. Here we have an image of the yew tree flawlessly painted in a cemetery, but are warned of its deadly accents. This is a perfect way to introduce the first haiku, which gives not only meaning to the phases of the moon itself, but also the interpretation that we, as humans, slowly fade away just as we feel we've lived a full life. Following this, we dig until hitting the roots of the yew tree where we find the dead who reside in the cemetery, decomposed and giving the tree new life. The final haiku is a perfect way to end an eerie piece that makes your skin crawl as we can see the new life slipping into the new dawn.

-Lori A Minor

Third Peace- Textual Art  
Susan Burch

I wish it was a trick  
because it wasn't a treat –  
the texts  
from my sister's husband  
hitting on me

Most of us, if not all have been there... it's late at night, maybe even Halloween night and you're watching a suspenseful movie. You just reached the climax and the anticipation of what comes next is keeping you on the edge of your seat... suddenly the phone rings or vibrates and it scares the shit out of you, but you laugh it off because it was nothing. You answer the call, or in this case a text, and it's someone you just really don't want to talk to. In this tanka, Susan explores this classic scene, but embeds her own twist, which is what makes this piece of art particularly terrifying. It's a real life situation. How can this get any worse, you ask? Well, imagine it's your sibling's significant other hitting on you. Burch does such a wonderful job taking a traditional phrase and spinning it to the world of adulthood. Even if you can't relate to the exact situation at hand, I'm sure you've been in a similar one.

-Lori A Minor

# Chase's Pick- Textual Art Michael Nickels-Wisdom

autumn rain—  
even the dead can be  
pretty

Ahhhh... What a brilliant observation. I see rain falling in a cemetery, covering every headstone in sight with a glaze of water from the heavens. The words “rain” and “dead” generally evoke very somber emotions, but Michael managed to take these two subjects and blend them together in such a way that creates a light and almost peaceful atmosphere. Although it's not as “Halloweenie” as some of the other winning pieces, this is one of my all time favorite haiku and it will remain in my mind until I'm gone.

-Chase Gagnon

Lori's Pick- Textual Art  
David J Kelly

franken-cents  
saving the trick or treat fund  
for Christmas

Can you imagine having to tell your children they can't have Halloween costumes because you have to save for Christmas? I can't... but I can say I've been on the receiving end of the conversation. There are so many layers in this haiku that I can't wait to explore with you. First, the use of frankincense in the first line is pure genius. Frankincense gives you the warm feeling of Christmas, but Kelly hyphenates the word and breaks it down into two parts: "franken" to give us the traditional Halloween image and "cents" to imply money, which feeds in perfectly to lines two and three. In line two we see that they've probably had to save for awhile just to get Halloween costumes, but the shift into line three tells us trick or treating just isn't going to happen this year. This haiku, which has easily become one of my favorites I've ever read, is incredibly touching and is sure to stick with you. No matter how many times I read it, I tear up every time.

-Lori A Minor

First Place- Visual Art  
Kyle Hemmings



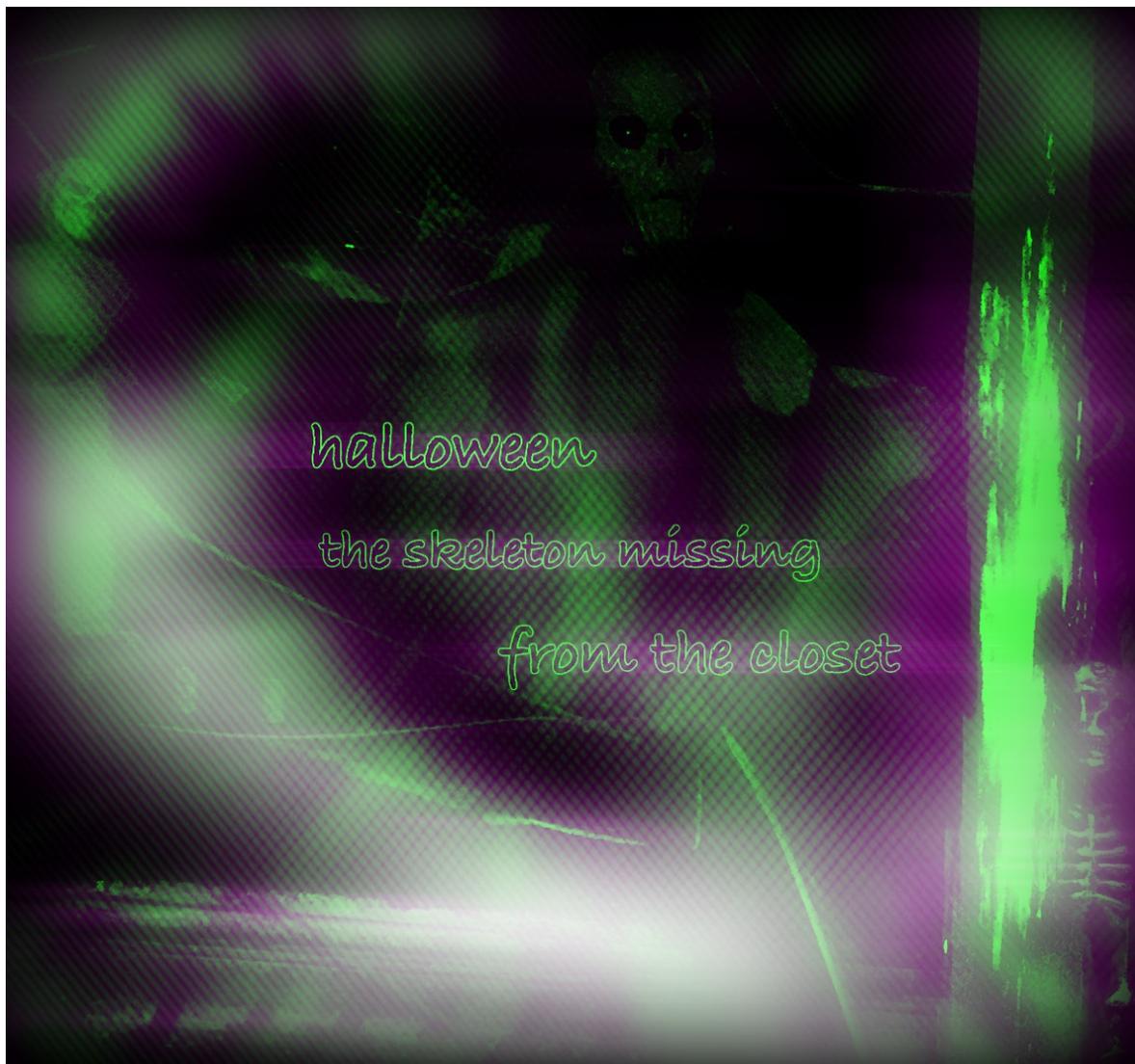
The thing that initially drew me into this haiga was how brilliantly strange the image is. Two Scarecrow looking figures with pumpkin heads on a busy city street. One male and one female. The man suspended upside down and the woman looks to be pregnant. We can all agree that this is odd, and maybe even a little creepy. But Kyle Hemmings composed the photograph perfectly. The square crop and subtle blur really isolate this display from the surroundings of the city, which I believe enhances the piece. The minimal post-processing also gives it a “real world” vibe, which only makes these scarecrow figures more odd.

What I love most about the poem that Kyle wrote for the haiga is that it is equally strange. Admittedly, I have no idea what Hemmings wanted to say here, or why this scarecrow display was set out on the street – However, that's why I fell in love with this piece. In my opinion, this is a haiga that could take on new meanings every time you look at it. The way “he swallows your childhood” feeds into the pregnant scarecrow with a pumpkin head is unique and brilliant, and invites you to explore the image for more interpretations.

Kyle Hemmings is a master at this kind of thing – pulling together so many elements and making them coexist in harmony, with a resonance that one would have a hard time explaining in words.

-Chase Gagnon

Second Place- Visual Art  
Jennifer Sutherland



Jennifer Sutherland's exceptional haiga lures us in with an eerie image – green and purple swirls of mist with skeletons hiding in the background. It goes without saying that this image is pretty badass. I'm not sure how she made it and what software she used, but the end result is perfect. The thing that really pushes this image into greatness is the poem –

halloween  
the skeleton missing  
from the closet

We all know what it means to have skeletons in your closet, but this takes an old, perhaps even over-used phrase and puts a completely unique spin on it. Is it metaphorical, or have the Halloween decorations come to life and wandered out into the night? Either way, the poem is brilliant and the image only makes it better and adds to the mood. I think we can all agree that this is a perfect example of everything a haiga should be.

-Chase Gagnon

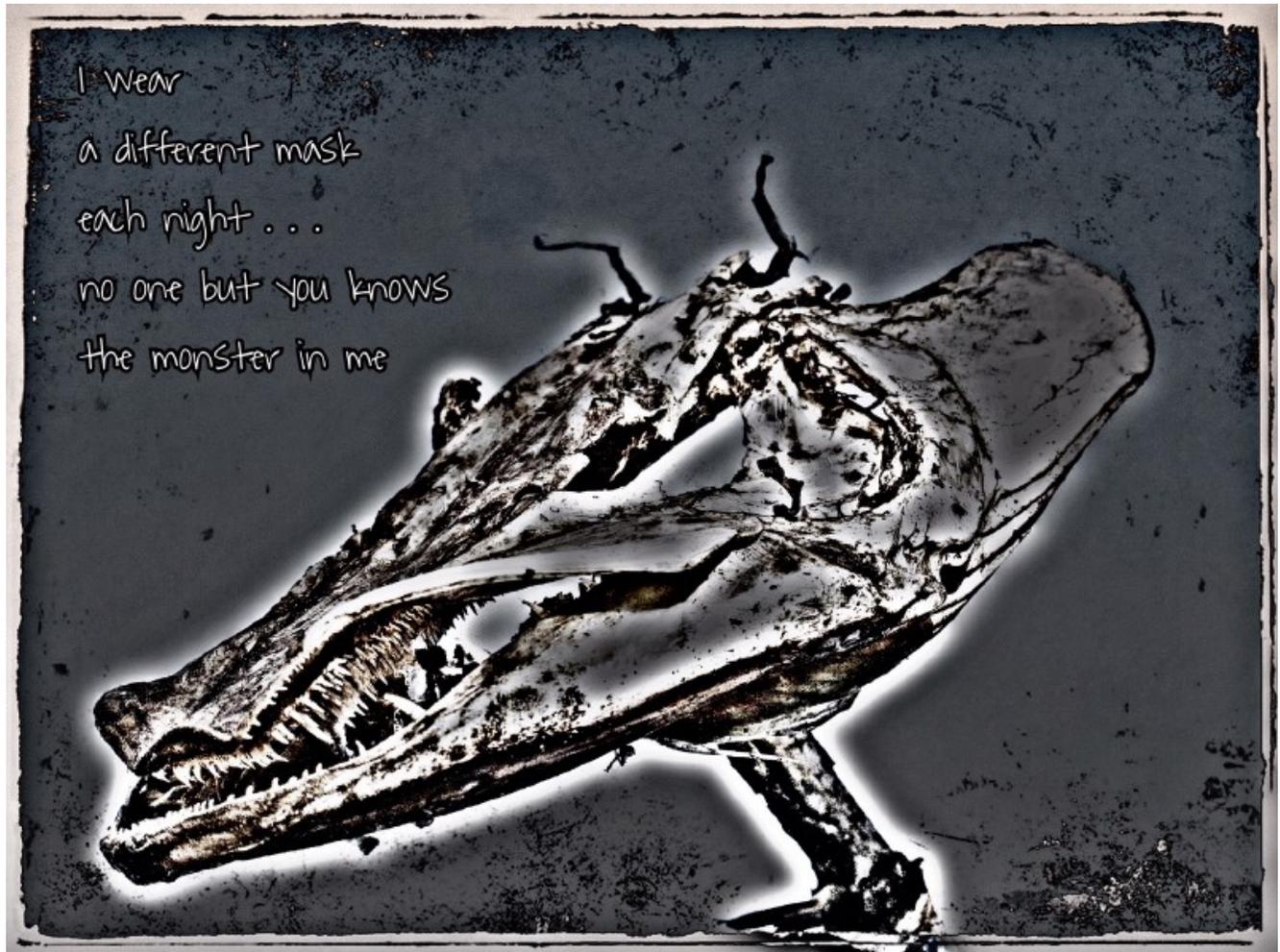
Third Place- Visual Art  
Christine L. Villa



Okay... WOW! Look at this image, and then tell me with a straight face that it isn't awesome. I bet you can't. The colors just pop, and all the little details and textures make it rich. When I first saw this image, I wanted to run my hand across the computer screen to feel it. The poem Christine paired with the art is perfect, as well. I feel it stitches all the elements of the image together, and really changes the tone of the piece to something a little more spooky, and perhaps even darker. "midnight" is not a word that would've popped into my mind for this image, but I feel that it works extremely well in this case because it invites you in to explore this complex image even more. This is truly a brilliant and surreal haiga.

-Chase Gagnon

Lori's Pick- Visual Art  
Debbie Strange



Each of us have our own idea of “terrifying”. For me, it’s real-life monsters as I have come to face many in my short twenty-five years. This haiga really hits home for me and as soon as I saw it, I couldn’t help but think it deserved an award. First of all, the image is startling. I love that you can’t tell exactly what it is... dinosaur, fish, sea monster – it’s just unclear, but I think that’s what compliments the tanka so well. I’m sure we have all met someone who wears a mask and leads you to believe they are someone they aren’t. Those are the most terrifying of people. They prey on your vulnerability and wait for the right moment to attack. What takes the horror a step further is that only *you* know who they really are. All I can say is be careful who you put your trust in... the real-life monsters are the ones that can really hurt you.

-Lori A Minor

Chase's Pick- Visual Art  
Veronika Zora Novak



The thing that I love about this haiga most is the use of “death poem” – a very traditional concept in Japanese poetry, where the poet would compose a haiku as he/she was dying. The image Veronkia paired with the poem is perfect, the graves are old and faded and the people buried there are probably long forgotten. This juxtaposes so well with the haiku, the second two lines almost suggesting that these headstones are, in a way, like death poems – one breath that will linger forever.

-Chase Gagnon