

Punk Planet

By Justin Withem

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Web Address: www.punkplanet.com

What They Publish: fiction, columns, interviews, how-to's (DIY columns)

Submission Guidelines: by e-mail, 1600 words or less

Description: Indie/punk music and culture bimonthly print magazine.

Prose Per Issue: 1 short story (6 annually).

Prose Reviews:

"*Tetris*" by Justin Taylor is a plainspoken speculative story in a domestic setting about the end of the world. The first person narrator is sitting in his living room with his girlfriend, who is trying to decipher the Bible while the apocalypse seems more and more imminent. She is mad because he has taken a class on religion and refuses to help her. Instead, all he does is try again and again to beat the game "Tetris". She throws a tantrum and cries herself to sleep as he looks up from his game and sees the end of the world slowly advancing toward his living room window.

The author does an excellent job of keeping the apocalypse away from the spotlight in this story: it is not primarily a story about the end of the world; it is about a boyfriend and girlfriend's last moments together. The introduction to the world, though, seemed a bit rushed: only two sentences in the whole story are devoted to establishing the fact that the world is going to end. While too much exposition may have been exhausting, we could use a bit more for such a major event as "The End".

"*Lady of the Lake*" by Trinie Dalton is a plainspoken story in which the narrator is at a Girl Scout Camp with her friend Amy. The two have become fascinated by R-rated horror movies and the legend of King Arthur. One day, swimming in the lake at camp, the narrator thinks she feels someone grab her ankle from underwater. This scares Amy, but the next day the two girls go swimming anyway. Amy gets tangled in weeds, and the narrator dives to free her, becoming entangled herself. The two of them are rescued by Rita, the metalhead Girl Scout lifeguard--the narrator's "lady of the lake."

This story is effective in voice, in scene, in dialogue, in just about every technical way. It just isn't about much of anything. The author does an excellent job of capturing the voices of her characters, she sees the dramatic scenes very well, uses descriptive language masterfully, but the scene lacks something. Without a major event that speaks for itself in terms of climax or character change or story arc, an author must reveal some sort of epiphany or resolution that doesn't seem obvious to the reader, but this story simply describes the event, gives a brief paragraph-long reflection, and ends.

Rating: 3 out of 10. While perfectly accessible to new and emerging writers with a range of styles, attention must be paid to the fact that there are only six stories printed annually: this doesn't necessarily increase the publication's standards, it just limits the author's chances.