



Little Visible Delight

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Often the most powerful and moving stories are generated by writers who return time and again to a particular idea, theme, or image. Obsession in a writer's imagination can lead to accomplishment or to self-destruction. Consider Poe and his pale, dead bride; his fascination with confinement and mortality; his illness and premature death. Or Flannery O'Connor's far less soul-crushing fondness for peacocks. Some writers pay a high price for their obsessions, while others maintain a crucial distance. Whichever the case, obsessions can produce compelling fiction.

Little Visible Delight is an anthology of original stories in which eleven authors of dark fiction explore some of their most intimate, writerly obsessions.

Little Visible Delight Details

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From Reader Review Little Visible Delight for online ebook

Darcia Helle says

I sometimes find anthologies difficult to rate, since the quality of writing can vary tremendously from one author to the next. With this collection, I had no such problem. While there is a wide range in style, each story is well written and, as a whole, there is a perfect continuity in flow and pace.

The content overall is fairly dark, and varies from time travel to paranormal to psychological suspense. A common factor, aside from the thread of 'obsession', is that the writing has a kind of poetic beauty to the sentences. I especially love this dichotomy of dark themes written with beautiful words.

Randolph says

This is a pretty good anthology of strange tales about obsession. There are two brilliant stories, a few good ones, and one absolute piece of bullshit.

The two best stories are *Calligraphy* by James Everington and *This Many* by S.P. Miskowski, the latter being one of the most chilling ghost stories I've read in awhile.

Unfortunately I feel compelled to deal with the piece of crap. Each author writes a little piece about their obsession after each story. One of these, longer than the story itself, is a self serving piece of rubbish. If you want to include a suicide note with your story, fine, but the editors should have rejected it. The author proceeds to name check about a dozen famous literary suicides while lampshading his own paltry contribution to the literary canon and recounting his own experiences with stepping off the pier. The piece is complete with footnotes (!) going so far as to quote famous Roman suicide (he was probably compelled to do it, not by choice) Petronius Arbiter. At least the story that accompanied this diatribe was good.

Suicide is mental illness not heroism. Unfortunately and tragically it seems that some of those who plumb the depths are also our greatest artists, however the vast majority are just like the rest of us. Mental illness does not a genius make. The fact that it is a great career move for some artists is a reflection on those of us that are left, not the artists themselves.

Lehua Parker says

From the popularity of movies like *Fatal Attraction* to the TLC reality series *My Strange Addiction*, it's no surprise that we're fascinated by the extreme forms love, hate, desire, fear, and need take. *Little Visible Delight* is an anthology of darkly twisted obsession tales written by eleven talented novelists from the Omnium Gatherum Media stable.

Like most anthologies, the stories are varied in tone, pacing, and style. A couple of them stand out for their literary echos: *A Thousand Stitches* by Kate Jonez and *The Point* by Johnny Worthen. I particularly enjoyed

these two for the thought-provoking themes that stayed with me long after I'd read them.

The one that still keeps me up all night is JP by Brent Michael Kelly. You'll never look at people who carry little dogs everywhere the same way again.

The most difficult for me to relate to was An Unattributed Lyric, In Blood, On a Bathroom Wall by Ennis Drake. The story form is on the experimental side, and it explores the futility of trying to capture the human experience in literature. Perhaps it hits a little too close to home.

A special bonus and one of my favorite things about this analogy are the authors' notes at end of each story that explain their inspiration and how particular themes continually reoccur—obsess them, really—as writers.

Perfect for late night reading, Little Visible Delight is sure to take the reader on paths seldom traveled. Flashlight under the covers recommended.

Little Visible Delight is published by Omnium Gatherum Media and is available in paperback and eBook.

Joseph says

If you like short stories that are dark, and on the far edge of reality, Little Visible Delight is an anthology of short stories that will deliver the horror/fantasy fix you crave. Consisting of 12 stories, each author has crafted chilling, thought provoking tales, all of which are centered on the theme of obsession. Most of the stories are written in a beautiful prose style, delivering a shock, or at the least a surprise which I didn't see coming. My favorites were The Receiver of Tales by Lynda E. Rucker, which I found to be an excellent way to start the book, and Needs Must When the Devil Drives by Corey J. Herndon, which is a wonderful time-travel tale of murder, and man's obsession with mortality. Not all of the stories are equally entertaining, but all do delve into territory that is both dark and fantastical. I would recommend this anthology for fans of John Grover, Peter Straub, or Harry Crews. What I love about reading a good anthology, is the fact that I almost always discover a writer that I have never read, whose work prompts me to search out everything they have written. In this case, that author is Corey J. Herndon. Give this collection a chance, and I believe you will be glad that you did.

Rena Mason says

Love the cover art for this book! I enjoyed every story in this anthology in different ways. Some were more subdued than others, but each one focused on an obsession in one way or another. A particular favorite was "This Many" by S.P. Miskowski. The story is about a woman who is generally obsessed about her daughter, but the woman also has OCD habits that truly exemplify the obsession and the outcome is every mother's nightmare. The stories are well-written. I recommend this anthology for fans of psychological horror.

Donald says

An excellent anthology, only 1 story I didn't dig. My favorite was "Black Eyes Broken" by Mercedes

Yardley, she can break your heart and make you love every moment. The rest were solid, with one exception that just didn't work for me.

Lauren says

Little Visible Delight offers its writers the chance to talk about—and write about—their obsessions, which is a chance no writer can afford to turn down. After all, they're doing it anyway. Nearly every writer has a set of obsessions. They may cultivate them, growing a garden of lush (and sometimes poisonous) stories, or they may ignore them, allowing these fixations to scatter through their body of work like weeds. But either way, these things take root, and take over. *Little Visible Delight* brings them all out into the open and as such, while the collection offers plenty of dark pleasure for the lay reader, it's particularly interesting for writers or those with a fascination for the craft: here are some excellent horror authors talking about what they can't stop talking about. It begs the question: what drives you? What permeates through you but gives you "little visible delight?"

If your obsession is quality horror anthologies, you're in luck.

Unsurprisingly, many of the authors here demonstrate an obsession with stories themselves, but never in a way that is inaccessible for readers only. Lynda E. Rucker's "The Receiver of Tales" is about the compulsion—sometimes awful, sometimes desirable—to be the vessel into which stories are poured. It's also about the horror of wishes that come true—and about the hope of undoing the seemingly irrevocable, which is to say it has just about everything you could possibly fit into a story, a neat trick given its subject. Cory J. Herndon's "Needs Must When the Devil Drives" is about time travel but, as Herndon makes clear in his author's note, it's also about storytelling and the drive to correct our mistakes, to retell and alter the narrative. In "Needs Must," that attempt—or, rather, those *attempts*—lead to a Möbius strip of actions, twists, and consequences. Most of all consequences: needs must when the plot drives, after all. Every author knows that.

James Everington continues the theme later in the book with "Calligraphy." Everington has written before about the overwhelming—and sometimes terrifying—power of words, which is fully on display here, but he's also written about scapegoats, so I see twinned obsessions here, and ones that pair very well together in this story of a man who finds himself covered in writing: a blank canvas others have inscribed their lives upon. They're both pleased and disgusted to see him. When he thinks he may have found absolution, instead he finds himself the vessel for others to rid themselves of their guilt: in some sense, this is about the horror of being the page all these stories are written upon. There's a delicate touch of the weird here, from the church that may not meet on Sundays to the salmon-colored robes, that sets the stage for what eventually befalls poor Blake.

And as always, isolation is part of that sentence, because another theme of this collection is the way pain separates us from others, so that those most in need of help are least likely to receive it.

Which is not to say the characters themselves always realize that:

Kate Jonez's "A Thousand Stitches" at first seems like the exception to that, as Jonez's Laura Beatty is lively and vivacious even in the cramped setting of the going-downhill tailor's she works in. But Laura carries more doubt—and more complications—around than the reader would initially guess, and the details of her world may be less solid and trustworthy than she thinks. It takes a thousand stitches to make a dollar, she

tells us: all that work for so little reward. This is a story in part about all those stitches (and all those *dropped* stitches, let's say) with no certain dollar coming at the end, but for all that, it is, as Jonez herself notes, surprisingly hopeful.

Maybe part of that hope stems from how Laura Beatty, like the narrator of Brent Michael Kelly's "JP," refuses to admit loss. "JP" is about—I hope!—a beloved pet dog and the lengths people will go to in order to preserve what they love. It has a nauseating, brilliant bit of body horror in it, and may have made me determined to watch how much I love my cat. Best to avoid our potential pitfalls when given clear warning.

More visibly and genuinely optimistic is Mary Borsellino's "Kestrel," where a girl who can't feel physical pain—to the discomfort and horror of those around her—finds the escape (the agony and ecstasy, if you will) that many isolated people before her have found. For all its early gruesomeness, this is a story with heart, not just blood.

But not all of the characters in this collection are lucky enough to find some escape, whether real or imagined, from their fates. Johnny Worthen's "The Point" is a darkly original story of an apocalypse that has never come and the man who has been waiting for it, obsessed by it, all his life. It has moments of pitch-black humor, but this underside of every tabloid headline is too knowing about the costs of fixation to provide any real laughs. Instead, it's shiver-inducing, and a reminder that we will all be lucky if our own obsession don't come with this kind of price tag.

"This Many," by S. P. Miskowski has a similar keen eye for the distorting power of obsession, and Miskowski brilliantly couches her analysis—and her genuinely disturbing horror—in a pitch-perfect evocation of a suburban party. I have a soft spot for stories where holes get punched into the ordinary, and Miskowski excels at that and at showing where the ordinary itself is frayed, and where one mother's overwhelming desire for perfection is unsettling long before anything supernatural appears.

"An Unattributed Lyric, in Blood, On a Bathroom Wall," by Ennis Drake, is surreal from the get-go: like its title, it is a snapshot image of a strange and threatening world, one that consumes artists, especially, in this case, those without the stomach or the patience for the grind. Many of its images are powerful, but it's weakened somewhat by Drake's overdone afterword, which tries to explain too much rather than trusting in the story. In a collection about obsession, however, an inability to let things rest is certainly forgivable, and those enamored or intrigued by the seemingly unique ability of artists to self-destruct *en masse* may consider Drake's essay a feature, not a bug.

The most horrific story of the collection for me was Mercedes M. Yardley's "Black Eyes Broken," where the innocent but cursed Natalia is systematically denied—by some unasked-for force residing inside herself—any comfort, love, or affection. The story covers the scope of Natalia's life but focuses particularly on her attempt to discover a loophole in her situation. The reader's sympathy for her and her dilemma is powerful, which only makes the story's events more devastating.

Finally, the collection finishes with "Bears: a fairy tale of 1958," an allegory that Steve Duffy has the good sense not to make a full allegory. Readers can see Duffy ringing the changes on stories of assimilation and prejudice, but nothing here provides a one-to-one connection, and Duffy is powerfully interested in bears as bears, not as stand-ins for humans, and in "Goldilocks" as a source of its own. This tale of bears in fifties suburbia is immensely readable, very moving, and a terrific way to close out the collection.

Little Visible Delight has a theme made for horror literature, a great set of authors, and a wide (and compelling) range of voices. The common threads throughout unify the stories and their concerns without

providing sameness. And when you reach the last page, you'll be thinking about what you're always thinking about. That one thing in the back of your mind that you never quite let go of. The concern that highlighted certain phrases of this book against your eyes. What you'll see tonight in your dreams—unless, of course, you're seeing bears, a woman in bloodstained scrubs, words written on skin, a pet dog, or... Well, you get the idea. One of the best things about *Little Visible Delight* is that it lets you try on someone else's obsession for a while. Which is, I have to say, a great relief from my own.

Cathy Geha says

This dark fiction anthology with the theme of obsession left me wanting more. The stories were well written and varied keeping me interested throughout the book. I would gladly read more stories/books by these authors.

Martin Cosby says

Obsession:

1. An idea or image that repeatedly intrudes upon the mind of a person against his will and is usually distressing.
2. The action of any influence, notion, or 'fixed idea', which persistently assails or vexes, esp. so as to decompose the mind.
3. The hostile action of the devil or an evil spirit besetting any one; actuation by the devil or an evil spirit from without; the fact of being thus beset or actuated.

When I found out that *Little Visible Delight*, the anthology of dark fiction by S.P. Miskowski and Kate Jonez, was themed along the lines of 'obsession', I felt compelled to get out my copy of the Compact Oxford English Dictionary. Each definition seemed scarier than the one before. It was a good omen.

There's nothing quite as inviting as a collection of dark fiction, especially with every story being new to me; and every page of this publication is to be savoured, consisting of edgy, unnerving tales of subtle strangeness. Proceedings kick off with *The Receiver of Tales*, by Lynda E. Rucker, in which Aisha recalls her intimacy with Ruben, and of how he had been usurped by people's stories; and of how it ruined him. Has this curse been transferred to her? It seems so, as she carves precious words all over her body. Is she stronger than he, or will she take the easy way out? She embarks upon a dreamlike journey, and at its conclusion, Aisha realises she cannot live without the very obsession she railed against.

Preoccupation with the fountain of youth and the ruthless pursuit of immortality is tackled in the complex *Needs Must When the Devil Drives*, by Cory J. Herndon. It seems we must be careful what we wish for, and be grateful for being a long time dead! Next up Kate Jonez provides *A Thousand Stitches*. Laura Beatty finds herself at Malley's Dry Cleaners, a down-at-heel establishment which she hopes is a stepping-stone to the exciting life just around the corner in New York. She repairs wedding dresses with Judy, a worker who seemingly has a murky past with the firm. When conditions and pay are changed for the worse, Laura Beatty

faces the fact she may never be able to achieve her dream of escape; yet a chance is given and taken both immediately and gratefully. Once she is safely in New York, however, the reader has cause to question both her motives, her methods and even her identity.

Johhny Worthen's intriguing tale *The Point*, set in the dark bunker of the mind, tackles death and Armageddon, leading on to *Calligraphy*, by James Everington. Blake rises one morning, not as a beetle, nor even to be arrested, but to find 'elegant, cursive writing' all over his face. He is, however, unable to decipher the meaning of the words. Forced to forsake his preferred seclusion in order to seek some kind of explanation, a neighbour leads him to an unfamiliar church, in what has become an unfamiliar world; in front of the congregation, the priest reads the words on his face. Does this bring enlightenment, or just the opposite? A typically compelling story by this author.

This Many, by S.P. Miskowski, explores the world of the competitive parent. Stay-at-home mother Lorrie dreams of the perfect fairy dress for her daughter Frances, and forces her to don it for her birthday party: "'Mom made it so I have to wear it,' Frances said, and rolled her eyes.' During this extravaganza, an extra adult appears and causes much confusion after disappearing somewhere within the house. A search reveals nothing, but the contact between the sinister intruder and Frances has caused something to change, so that next year's party may not be looked forward to quite so enthusiastically... Miskowski deftly exposes the cracks present behind the facade of the perfect family, leaving the reader to wait for the inevitable collapse.

JP, by Brent Michael Kelley, explores a child's seemingly innocent obsession with a pet which has died; and of how a strong desire not to be separated ends in something gruesome. Deceptively simple, this story is not for the fainthearted, and is as close to conventional 'horror' as this collection gets. *Black Eyes Broken*, by Mercedes Yardley, is the sad tale of Natalia, who has the unfortunate knack of destroying everything she loves. Her relationships inevitably end in tragedy, and this leads to her withdrawal from the world. Worse is to come, however, as she thinks of the future.

This fine anthology is topped off by *Bears: a Fairy Tale of 1958*, by Steve Duffy. This is a finely-wrought take on *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, documenting the Bear family's attempt to assimilate into late-1950s society, but suffering from discrimination, heartache and practical problems at every turn. Tongue-in-cheek it may be but it still packs a satisfying punch.

There is not a weak story here; and, add to this the excellent design and presentation of the Kindle version I bought, means I would recommend this wonderful collection to anyone who enjoys short stories.

Tracie McBride says

Little Visible Delight is my kind of anthology; the horror is quiet, thoughtful and unsettling. The anthology opens with a quotation from *Wuthering Heights*, from which the anthology draws its title. The literary classic makes for an apt inspiration. Contributions have been selected with an eye for quality over quantity, thus achieving that near-mythical aim of anthology editors; every story squarely hits the mark.

Each author has gone for a distinctly different take on the central theme of obsession, with hardly a well-worn trope in sight. And where the author has used a common trope, as in Cory J. Hendon's "Needs Must when the Devil Drives" and "Bears: A Fairy Tale of 1958" by Steve Duffy, their interpretations are innovative and refreshing. Along with the theme of obsession, many of the stories share a common thread of social distance and isolation; of protagonists cast, by choice or circumstance, alone and adrift in a hostile world.

Each story ends with a brief afterword from the author which gives the reader extra insight into the story's conception. Some readers find this intrusive; I found it interesting, and for me it enhanced my experience of their stories.

I don't often write an anthology review which discusses every story individually, but when I do...it's for one like this.

"Before we get to where you want to go, you have to tell me your story."

"The Receiver of Tales" by Lynda E. Rucker.

Writers, a theme of obsession – you just know there has to be a story about stories, don't you? In "The Receiver of Tales", Aisha's dubious "gift" is a double-edged sword. Most writers will be able to identify with the protagonist's agony.

"The man I meant to kill wouldn't be home for another thirteen and a half minutes."

"Needs Must When the Devil Drives" by Cory J. Herndon.

I'm not going to tell you which speculative fiction trope Herndon has used here, because that would be a spoiler. This story is blackly funny in places, the darkness intensifying the deeper you get into it.

"Remember it takes a thousand stitches to make one dollar. Don't waste any more stitches."

A Thousand Stitches by Kate Jonez

Jonez' perfection of Laura Beatty's voice meant that these people felt real to me. And I cared about them.

"He was living in the last minutes of the planet and he knew it."

The Point by Johnny Worthen

Ah, the tragic irony of a life lived waiting to die... This is the kind of story where the reader is kept constantly and deliberately unbalanced, never knowing what is fantasy and what is real.

"You are still different and alone."

"Calligraphy" by James Everington

This story has commonalities with "The Receiver of Tales"; besides the themes, it features words spontaneously appearing on human skin, and a protagonist who has removed him/herself somewhat from social interaction. The execution and conclusion, however, are distinctly different, thus preserving the delicate balance between uniqueness and cohesiveness.

"Where would the girl turn without her mom?"

"This Many" by S.P. Miskowski

Another story that resonated strongly with me; I have known women like this, and at times been a woman like this. I started out wanting to slap the protagonist, and ended up wanting to hug her.

"This is how it ought to be, and as far as I'm concerned, we can stay like this forever."

"JP" by Brent Michael Kelley

Is JP a dog, or is JP a child? The fact that you're never quite sure is testament to the power of this story.

"A girl as silent as a shadow, named for a harsh sound."

"Kestrel" by Mary Borsellino

Ultimately, a curiously uplifting story about the value of pain.

"You always knew he'd be the last to go. But you knew he'd go."

"An Unattributed Lyric, In Blood, On a Bathroom Wall" by Ennis Drake

An unconventionally structured story, which is always fun when done well (and this is done very well), on

one of the blackest obsessions of all.

“She thought of her baby and waited for the cracks.”

“Black Eyes Broken” by Mercedes M. Yardley

Sometimes the message is best found between the lines... As the author elaborates in the afterword, this is a story about love and the broken, told with an admirable economy of words.

“I’ve been dancing to their tune. All my life, Mama. Now the music’s stopped, and there isn’t a chair left for me to sit in.”

“Bears: A Fairy Tale of 1958” by Steve Duffy

“Goldilocks and the Three Bears” meets an obsession with anthropomorphism meets David Lynch in what is my favourite story in the anthology.
