

Bad Romance



An anthology of dysfunctional desire



Edited by Robin Wolfe



A Freaky Fountain Press anthology

This is a preview copy, featuring the Introduction, the Trigger Warnings list, and the beginning of four stories from the anthology.

Introduction

Freaky Fountain Press was born in early 2010 out of the frequent conversations Catherine and I would have, despairing over the difficulty in finding quality erotica that falls far outside of the mainstream. We're both writers as well, purveyors of the freaky, and we also commiserated over how hard it is for authors to find markets for unusual erotica. Someone needs to start publishing the really freaky stuff, we'd often say.

A couple of years later, we decided that we may as well be that someone.

After nearly eighteen months of work, what was an idea, a dream, and an ambition has been wrought by sheer force of will into something real. You're holding one of the first Freaky Fountain anthologies in your hands.

For our first anthologies, we chose themes dear to our hearts. For Catherine's *This Is The Way The World Ends*, she indulged her love for apocalyptic scenarios; for *Bad Romance*, I succumbed to my fascination with dysfunctional relationships. I never tire of exploring dysfunction, of dissecting the ways that two or more people can bring out the worst in each other. Adding elements of lust and love to a dysfunctional relationships ratchets up the intensity; people continue to pull each other down, and yet they can't seem to break away...and oftentimes they don't *want* to break away. During the months we spent preparing for and then working on this anthology, songs like Eminem feat Rihanna's "Love The Way You Lie" and Lady Gaga's "Bad Romance" dominated the airwaves. The former covers the dynamics of abuse; the latter explores the overwhelming desire for self-destruction. Were they bits of erotic fiction rather than songs, both would be perfect fits in this anthology.

There are thirteen stories in this collection. They range from serious to farcical, and feature both straight and queer pairings. What unites them all are their distinct literary voices, and how each explores - in their own way - a bad romance.

Enjoy *Bad Romance*, and stay freaky.

-Robin Wolfe

Jeanette Grey

Bleeding Red

Red's paintings are all of sex and violence these days. There are masticated bodies and the gleaming white of bones and cum, the pieces scarred with thick black lines and scarlet ink. I take them in with a shudder, the long lines of my nails digging hard against my flesh, and I can almost taste him on the canvas.

Once, I almost lick the white pine frame.

Sticking to the back of the gallery, I laugh with my friends and pretend to be smart enough to take apart the things Red writes in ink and flame, but I know that there are thoughts inside the images that I will never understand. Ignoring the way he moves around the room, talking and flirting with all the pretty girls, I numb the heavy feeling of his eyes on my spine with another glass of vodka and lime.

The alcohol is clear and the limes are green. But everything else is a fog.

When the sight of shattered skulls and glossy paint becomes too much, I take another drink and stumble out the door. "I'll be right back," I tell my friends, but the looks in their eyes make it clear that they don't believe me.

I don't believe me either.

Outside, the night is cool and wet and everything the gallery is not. I feel the air against my cheeks and lean my head against the brick, staring in at warmth and at the place where, a year ago, my body would have been. For a minute, as I flick my thumb against the wheel of my lighter, I think the spark illuminates my features on one of the paintings inside.

A year ago, they would all have looked like me.

I cup the flame and bring its heat up to my mouth, breathing deeply with my lips around the filter. The smoke tastes like dying and everything I am looking for these days.

Red always hated it when I smoked.

I wonder if he'd hate it still.

S.L. Johnson

Love Letters

To: XX

Subject: Be careful what you wish for

I'd like to preface the following by reminding you that this is *your* idea. *You* want uncensored honesty. *You* think this letter writing exercise you found on 'The Google' will be good for us. I'll tell you what I think.

I think in every relationship, each person has a little room of their own. You can fill it with anything you want and use it for whatever strikes your fancy. My room is filled with creatures, asteroids, indecisive metaphors, unmedicated manias, and evil robots—everything relevant to my inner life. They burrow in the walls and hang from the ceiling; sometimes they rearrange the furniture, but I don't mind. My room exists only for me, and yet I use it almost exclusively for one thing—it's the place I go to scream. I want you to understand that by asking me for the truth, you're asking for a key to my room. And I want you to know that it's because I do love you, that I'm going to give you everything you think you want.

What do I value most in our relationship? Well, that's easy.

Implants. Fake tits of planetary proportions. Tight and shimmering, like pearls ready to crack, giving birth to acid-spitting dragons. Beautiful and monstrous. The nipples look like add-ons, rubbery tumors affixed to otherwise perfect spheres. Maybe not perfect—in relation to each other—the left is bigger than the right. Jupiter and Saturn. I read somewhere that if Jupiter were to get any bigger, it would start folding in on itself. But it's the shape as much as the size, the infinite curvature of augmented flesh.

And before you implode, let me assure you that I am taking this seriously. If I weren't you'd know—because I'd be typing the entire thing in Comic Sans.

J.D. Hastings

Ink

One.

The first time I saw her, she was out behind the grocery store breaking beer bottles against the Dumpster. I'd followed the sound of the hollow explosions and come around to the loading ramp to see her cock her arm back, bottle in hand. She pitched it full force. The Dumpster shuddered and rang and glass showered down on the pavement. I leaned against the scratched railing and watched her pick up the next bottle from the large cardboard bin. Her hair fell in a shocking pink wave down one side of her face, buzzed close to the scalp in back, and her mouth, twisted in a scowl, was full and red without any makeup. A ring curled through the center of her bottom lip. Her t-shirt was mostly holes, black with some unreadable design in white, her pale skin flashing through. Her jeans were dirty and faded, their cuffs tucked into engineer's boots that looked a few sizes too large for her. Tattoos covered her arms.

She let another bottle fly and the air shook with the concussion. She caught me watching and turned toward me, arms stretched wide.

"Want something?" she growled.

She took a step toward me, like she was ready to fight. I kept still, leaning on the other side of the railing. As long as she didn't have a bottle in her hand, I wasn't too worried.

"Just watching the show," I smiled.

"Well fuck off." She turned and stomped back to the bin and dug out another bottle. I walked down to the end of the railing and came around behind her, giving her a wide berth. I grabbed a bottle, cocked back my own arm, and threw it as hard as I could. It sailed end over end, just missed the lip of the Dumpster, and exploded against the wall behind it.

"Shit for aim," she muttered. There was a touch of southern in her talk, like she was trying to hide it. She threw her own bottle and we both stood there, our ears ringing with the sound. She looked sideways at me from under that shock of hair, something like a smile curling the side of her mouth.

Pepper Espinoza

Favorite

Jakob cornered Marvin in the copy room, shutting the door behind him with a loud click. Marvin heard it over the copy machine, busy spitting out page after page of TPS reports. Desire and unease knotted in his throat as he turned to face the other man, knowing who he'd face before he turned around. The physical attraction had been immediate when their paths had first crossed, and Marvin, frightened by the abrupt feelings, pushed them into the deepest parts of his mind. Jakob was a spoiled rotten asshole who stalked through the office, looking for the weak to bully and harass in subtle, dickish ways. Nobody filed complaints against him, because he never broke the rules. Marvin didn't want to be his newest victim. He'd seen grown men break down from Jakob's incessant needling; their pride fatally stung by the obvious joy Jakob took in digging his finger into every single sore spot and insecurity.

"Emory. I've been looking for you."

"Oh?" Marvin smiled pleasantly. He'd had survived Jakob's kind before. It usually paid to be as polite and deferential as possible. "I guess you haven't been looking very hard. I'm usually at my desk."

"Already with the smart mouth?"

"If you're wondering about the reports..."

"I don't give a fuck about the reports."

"If you have a problem, I'm sure we can work together for a solution," Marvin said, the spit disappearing from his mouth as Jakob wedged an office chair under the doorknob. *That damned chair shouldn't even be in here.*

"I already know the solution to my problem."

"Then let's talk about it. Out at my desk. Or in your office."

Jakob shook his head and approached Marvin, covering the space between them with long strides. Marvin didn't want to lose ground, but he took an automatic step back, then another, until he ran out of room, wedged in the corner between the wall and the copier. Jakob blocked his only escape.

A note about trigger warnings

Being “triggered” is when someone has experienced psychological trauma in the past, and as a result, experiences psychological distress in the current time when they read, see, or hear about something similar to their experience. A “trigger” is something that causes a particular person to re-experience some of the emotions or sensations of their past trauma.

Due to the nature of Freaky Fountain content, our publications may have a higher risk of triggering people. As we don’t wish to cause our readers distress, we have provided a “trigger warning” list at the back of the book (check the Table of Contents for the exact page number). If you have triggers, you can scan the Trigger Warning list to see which stories you may want to avoid.

(Note that triggers are different from “squicks”; squicks may leave people feeling disgusted or mildly disturbed, but they are not psychologically traumatizing. Common squicks might be necrophilia, bestiality, or sex play involving unusual bodily fluids. We do not warn for squicks.)

The triggers we warn for are: domestic violence, child abuse, incest (consensual), incest (non-consensual), rape or dubious consent, drug and alcohol use, body issues/eating disorders, self-injury, cutting, extreme violence, and some other common triggers.

Though we do our best to make sure that the Trigger Warning list is as complete and as detailed as possible, triggers may sometimes slip through the cracks, and while the Trigger Warning list is a helpful tool for helping you decide which stories you’d like to read, ultimately the decision to read some or all of our material is your own. Any psychological or other consequences thereof are your own responsibility.

Trigger warnings

We warn for domestic violence, child abuse, incest (separated into “consensual” and “non-consensual”), rape and dubious consent, drug and alcohol use, body issues/eating disorders, self-injury, cutting, and several other common triggers.

If the language “brief mention of” is used prior to a trigger being listed, that means the reference is extremely quick or lacks detail; for example, while “brief mention of domestic abuse” may refer to one character slapping another non-consensually, there isn’t detailed discussion of the event. “Brief mention of alcohol use” would be a passing comment about a character’s glass of wine rather than in-depth descriptions of drunkenness or the craving of alcohol.

1. **Bleeding Red:** Cutting, brief mention of alcohol use, dubious consent
2. **Love Letters:** Brief mentions of domestic abuse, brief mention of body issues
3. **Ink:** Alcohol use
4. **Favorite:** Dubious consent
5. **Coma:** Rape, dubious consent, domestic abuse
6. **Party Gal:** Alcohol use, torture
7. **Maleficent:** Murder, torture, drug use, rape, dubious consent
8. **The Affair:** Brief mention of alcohol use
9. **Blood Lust:** Child abuse, rape, incest (non-consensual), drug abuse, alcohol abuse, self-injury, cutting, mental illness
10. **Her Heart Is A Screen Door, Too:** Alcohol use, brief mention of rape, domestic abuse, brief mention of body image
11. **Sam And Jessie:** Domestic abuse, incest (consensual), brief mention of dubious consent
12. **On The Quiet:** Alcohol use
13. **Three Days In Summer:** Brief mention of alcohol use