

**Weird Tales** - Issue 353

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Web Address: [www.weirdtales.net](http://www.weirdtales.net)

What They Publish: Flash fiction, short stories

Submission Guidelines: Short stories may be 10,000 words or fewer; nothing larger should be submitted without a query letter first. Both hardcopy and e-mail submissions accepted. Hardcopy submissions should include an SASE, e-mail submissions should be in standard manuscript format. Simultaneous submissions are allowed, while multiple submissions are not. First North American Serial Rights required. Cover letters are appreciated but not required. Pay rate is 3-4 cents per word.

Description of Publication: Began in 1923, this was the first magazine catering exclusively to works of the dark and fantastic. They live up to their name, seeking to bring readers all that is weird and unsettling, stories that are strange and original with a proclivity to the dark side. They really like dark fantasy: pieces that push the envelope, are unique and original, or are new and unusual approaches to traditional stories. This magazine is a print journal.

Prose Per Issue/Amount Published Annually: 40%, 6-8 pieces per issue

#### Prose Reviews

*Weiroot*, by Jeffrey Ford, is a science fiction/dark fantasy piece in an old world setting, told in the first person. Weiroot, "a strange and cantankerous entity outside of society, the Man Who Escaped Hell," finds in a fallen star a tiny purple baby. He adopts the alien baby and describes they live together. The story ends with father and grown son, both strange in different ways, sitting down together as Weiroot divulges his past.

This is perfect example of the strange and odd things one can find in this publication. The story is solid, and the structure is strange and adds so much to the character. The story, flowing from one page to the next, does not have paragraph breaks, but, rather, is written in one long paragraph, like a lengthy musing thought. It perfectly captures the thrills of parenthood: "Then a kiss to that purple brow and you lean back in your rocker and rock beneath the stars from whence he came, closing your eyes and falling into a dream of the future." But it doesn't leave out the bad times: "He'll stamp and howl like a fox in a leg trap and pass through the walls a hundred times, for this will be one of his powers, and you'll patiently catch him and put him back and tell him NO!" In this way, despite the extreme oddities of the old man and the youthful alien son, it is easy to empathize with the characters.

*The Garbacologist*, by Jeff Johnson, is a contemporary dark fantasy piece in an urban setting told in the third person. An odd garbacologist, Turner, digs through the trash that clutters his world, seeking the best tokens. Hopes and aspirations, little blue marbles of possibility, even prayers litter the streets of a world where only a few can see them, and those who do are the garbacologists. The garbage begins disappearing, most likely due to a hellish truck that chases Turner at one point. Having no one else to go to, Turner meets with a rival garbacologist, Fullman. Fullman eats everything without discrimination, a human garbage disposal, and sneers at the way Turner only mouths the dreams and personality traits of the garbage he finds. After informing him that they are the only two left, Fullman ingests one of his own lost aspirations, which changes him dramatically and he begins to expel all the garbage he ingested over the years. Before he is finished, however, the black truck comes, and Turner only just

manages to get away. Turner heads back to his old house and gets rid of all the precious litter he'd found over the years before eating one of his own aspirations.

This story requires a huge suspension of disbelief, but delivers right down to the end. It is wonderfully descriptive and quirky, "Give up singing and a tooth flute might fall from your sleeve. Sicken of violent crime and you might lose an 11<sup>th</sup> knuckle bone made of metal... Kill yourself and a suicide bunny will hop out of the box where your personal belongings were thoughtfully condensed." This whimsical quality, however, does not diminish the weight of the story in the least. It retains a dramatic and powerful dynamic throughout with striking imagery and good storytelling.

Rating: 8.5. While this magazine has a lot of clout to it and often each issue includes work by well-known authors, they also delight in publishing emerging authors. They hold their work to a high standard and getting a piece in this magazine is an honor.