

This year, Ex Machina Press published *Silent Voices, Volume IV*, their annual fiction anthology which cultivates the most talented and diverse unpublished and published writers' works. The authors in this volume include Liam Callanan, David M. Booher, and Edward Belfar to name a few. The anthology is categorized into three sections: Twilight, Nightfall, and Daybreak bringing a sense of mystery, surprise, grief, humor, and surrealism to the human condition. The anthology also creates a message of time continuance for the audience as they read through the work either as individual stories or, if chosen, all at once in one or two sittings.

A young, inquisitive boy comes home from school and just as his family is about to sit down for dinner asks his father "How do we die, Dad?" without knowing exactly what he has done, the household changes form. His father becomes frustrated and furious that his son's progressive school did not send a note home first so they could be better prepared for a question about death. His wife tries to calm down their little girl who is now waving her hands in the air. She is now afraid that everyone is going to die, including her. However, there is an underlying fear and anger which the parents have not addressed yet.

In the short story, *Answer Me* by Liam Callanan, a family learns about death early in life. Callanan's talent for details places his audience and captures the emotions of his characters quickly. His poignant description of dinner engages his audience immediately. All characters share in the love they feel for each other and the unknown feelings of grief. Through Callanan's distinct emotional writing style, caring for his characters comes naturally.

David M. Booher depicts an elderly man who searches for a beast in his short story, *Martha*. However, the man is so caught up in his memories of his deceased wife, Martha, that his fear becomes intertwined with nostalgia of his life with her and thoughts of a so-called beast lurking in his house at 4 a.m. in the morning. As he roams throughout his neglected garden and basement, fear of imminent death nearly overwhelm him.

Booher narrates the entire story from the old man's perspective. There is no dialogue. None is needed. He beautifully portrays a widower, who misses his wife and writes his emotions through fascinating usage of metaphors, diction, and in depth characterization.

In *The Rule of Law*, writer Edward Belfar combines what could be a great episode on a primetime law show with his talented writing style. His main character, a lawyer, of course, takes on a case which is quite unusual. His client is a woman who not only has a quirky name but also sees everyone's aura. Her now ex-boyfriend is suing her because he believes that her negative energy caused him to go bankrupt, made her leave him, take her child (who he had become a surrogate father to), and caused him immeasurable emotional distress.

Belfar writes the story with humor and compassion. His style is easy and flows well and he easily engages the audience. *The Rule of Law* is written in such a way that the audience feels that they are in the office or the courtroom.

*Silent Voices: Volume IV* captivates all senses and the authors ask questions without answering them. The audience is left to contemplate and reflect on the words they just read. Without restrictions or borders, Ex Machina Press brought forth another beautiful tapestry of fiction writing.