

2026 KSP Spooky Story Competition

Judge's Report by Fionna Cosgrove, September 2026

YOUTH AWARDS

Shortlisted

- **My Reflection by Clementine C.**

If you think you know where this story is going - you don't. It's my kind of tale - starts out with concern, then confusion, then creepiness, then sad, wholesome feels. It can be hard to evoke emotion in 500 words, but this story did it.

- **The Consumer by Amy A.**

A fantastic story that felt urgent, scary and wholesome all at the same time. And with an ending this wonderfully macabre, you can't go wrong.

- **The Box I Couldn't Open by Kei T.**

A super creative story that had me hooked from the beginning. Despair is a painful emotion, but when used well can draw a reader in immediately. In this tale, once the truth behind our protagonist's suffering comes to light, the story takes on a whole new feeling.

Highly Commended

- **Static by Ava B.**

A well told, concise and creepy story. Tension builds effortlessly through the use of radio static and the idea it eludes to is entirely intriguing.

- **The Zombie Glitch by Audrey M.**

The theme of Glitch conjured up a few tales of gaming horrors, but this one was well executed, well written, and wonderfully eerie. Gaming session, anyone?

- **The Skimming Stone by Archie H.**

A really creative take on the theme that gave me nostalgic Truman Show vibes (never heard of it - go watch it now). Great use of dialogue and rhythm throughout, allowing the story to breathe and the reader to naturally build that tension.

Shire of Mundaring Encouragement Award

- **Pupils Rimmed with Yellow by Rory H.**

With the very real threat of AI looming on our horizons, this was a well written take on what our future potentially has in store. Are robots really going to be such a help around the house? Or are they secretly out to murder us all in our sleep? Jury's out.

Second Place

- **A Glitch in Time by Carys B.**

A theme like 'Glitch' lends itself to more tech heavy settings, so reading about the woodlands was a breath of fresh air (pun intended). The story itself hinted at some complicated family dynamics and a need to prove oneself. Contrasting a natural setting with something more sinister lurking within its shadows, made this story feel emotional and creepy.

First Place (Interstate)

- **The Glitch That Never Slept by Alexandra M.**

A well written, super creepy tale. This is an excellent example of how sometimes it's the quieter stories that can linger with you for longer. An excellent use of pacing and descriptions really set up the final scene, leaving the reader with more questions than answers.

First Place (WA)

- **Karma Never Rests by Olivia H.**

Really well constructed with a delicious amount of breadcrumbs sprinkled throughout. This story is well deserving of first place and I encourage you to do a few read throughs to get the most out of it. The intensity is there right from the start and I even felt a little breathless at its grim, yet satisfying, ending.

TEEN AWARDS

Shortlisted

- **45 Seconds Give or Take by Scarlet H**

I love a good dystopian tale and this one world-built impressively well for such a low word count. The idea of Initiates, capital, unfit and analysis of the mind is all so juicy, and I love the twist at the end. Really well written with a lot of room for the reader to breathe and take things in. Well done.

- **Polybius by Liam O.**

A well written piece diving into the folklore of Polybius. There were a lot of entries exploring glitches inside the digital realm of video games, but not many that explored it more physically. Creative and effective.

- **Melting Into the Void by Reny Z.**

One of the few real shocking body horror entries, and I devoured it. Fair warning - don't be eating when you read this story. The descriptions are gory, visceral and delightfully stomach churning. This is not a subtle piece of work that aims to tip toe you in, but rather one that slaps you in the face with an oozing, sore encrusted emaciated hand, and drags you into the cesspit for a further look...

Highly Commended

- **Dying on the Pass by Susanna N.**

The strong first line had me hooked immediately and the fantastic writing and intriguing storyline had me going back for more. The dialogue was casual and believable and the ending had me questioning everything.

- **Loading Your New Reality by Nina L.**

A delightfully peculiar story proving that nature can be two things all at once, both gentle and kind, whilst also cruel and unforgiving. And that description at the end 'sap in your throat' gave me the best kind of horror feels.

- **[AutoRecovery] Short_Story.exe (Restored) by Ruhi J.**

This story has a brilliant voice. Rom com meets horror, and I'm totally here for it. It was funny and self-deprecating and moved the story along really well. Also... tryphobic holes are now my new nightmare.

Shire of Mundaring Encouragement Award

- **You'll Find Me in the Shadows by Angelica B.**

A creepy tale of an unknown entity built with ongoing tension and suspense. This story had me hanging out for the final reveal.

Second Place

- **Since the Day I Arrived by Annabel S.**

Such a great use of sensory descriptors in this story, from damp burlap to oxidised tin walls, I could practically smell the farm setting. This piece is well written and well paced, and the author does a fantastic job of revealing just enough to get the reader's imagination to fill in the blanks. And that ending... oof.

First Place (Interstate)

- **Is This Dark Enough? by Henry G.**

A great title can work wonders, and this was a favourite of mine. This story was so well written, that even though I had my suspicions of where it was going, I was a willing participant the entire way. This story had me hooked from the first line. Oh, Al, when will we learn?

First Place (WA)

- **My Eviction by Charlotte Y.**

Well deserving of taking out first place, this story is a wild ride from start to finish. The last few lines are expertly crafted and really drive home the spiralling state of mind of our protagonist. I delighted in re-reading this story a few times over to relish in all the breadcrumbs scattered through the pages. Huge congratulations.

About the Judge

Born and bred in Perth, Western Australia, Fionna was raised on a far too paranormal diet of X-files, Are you Afraid of the Dark, Fact or Fiction and a plethora of other completely age-inappropriate TV shows. This has led to not only a peculiarly open mind, but also a taste for the delightfully mysterious and macabre.

When Fionna is not sitting in front of the computer screen trudging through painstaking first drafts, hanging out with her two kids and one amusingly logical husband, you can usually find her listening to paranormal podcasts, bingeing a new book series, baking cakes, following that black line in the pool, or investigating the latest conspiracy theories.

Fionna is the author of the interactive series, 'Twisted Trails', the spooky stand alone, 'Sadie and the Secret of the Swamp', and the collection of thirteen bubble-gum horror short stories 'All That Slithers'. She also writes for the kids' horror podcast 'Micro Terrors' where her stories are a mixture of creepy, amusing, and entirely bizarre.

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