

# Introduction

Loren Rhoads

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I have the honor of being in several writers' groups with Lisa Morton, former president of the Horror Writers Association and award-winning author of an ever-growing number of books on ghosts, Halloween, and zombies, as well as short stories, novels, and podcasts. Lisa was talking one night about these anthologies she had appeared in, alongside John Palisano, Eric J. Guignard, Rena Mason, and Kate Jonez. Each of them edited one book in the *Strange Tales of the Macabre* series, then each had a story in all five books. I was fascinated by the concept: sort of a round robin set of anthologies.

Then last year, Angel Leigh McCoy founded the Wily Writers collective, in which a bunch of writers—not all of them horror writers—support and encourage each other's work. I had a brainstorm: why didn't we put together some anthologies by the Wily Writers, to draw more attention to the group and showcase what we can do?

By the end of the first meeting of interested editors in January 2022, we'd hashed out the parameters of the series, chosen titles, and set deadlines. After that, it was just a matter of assembling the stories.

Lisa's book, *Tales of Dread*, was the first in the series. It came out in June 2022, a scant six months from when the idea first coalesced. This book—*Nightmares*—is the second in the series of six. The other four should appear more or less monthly for the rest of this year.

To say I am excited to participate in this series of anthologies would understate it. I am overjoyed to think that the idea I pitched to Angel in December last year is coming to such glorious and immediate fruition.

When we were batting around themes for the books, I was immediately drawn to *Nightmares*. It's safe to say that I really like nightmares. I find them thoroughly fascinating. How can imaginary pictures in my head cause such intense physical responses: the pounding heart, the ragged breaths, the muscle aches from running so hard or freezing so still as I hide?

When my kid was little, she was a sleepwalker. Either she would wake up calling my name or, worse, she would roam the house, eyes open but unfocused, terrified but unable to talk. Nightmares are a stage that all kids

go through, as they encounter the outer world. Some of us never get past it.

Personally, I have a *lot* of nightmares, but I don't think of myself as suffering from them. I think of them as fuel for my imagination. I see them as inspirations. Prompts, one might say.

While these pages contain the odd hallucination or vision from beyond, you'll find no dream sequences here. These stories are designed to induce nightmares.

Dear reader, I don't want to wish you sweet dreams. For you, I wish inspiring nightmares.

