

New Rivers Press Announces the Publication of

The Paper Demon and Other Stories

by Rosaleen Bertolino

Title: *The Paper Demon*

Author: Rosaleen Bertolino

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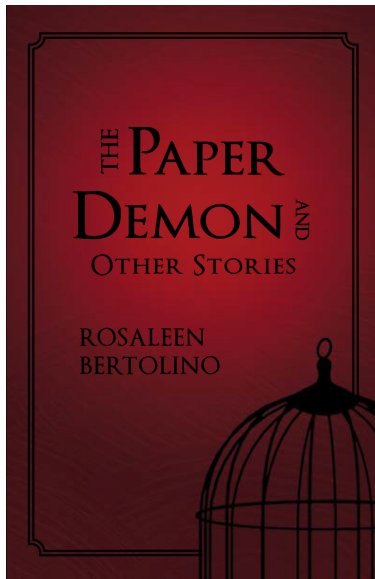
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Rosaleen Bertolino was born in San Francisco and raised just north. Her stories have most recently appeared in *Orca*, *New England Review*, and *failbetter* and her awards include a Marin Arts Council Individual Artist Grant, an honorable mention for the James D. Phelan Award, and finalist in the 2020 Press 53 Award for Short Fiction. She earned her MA in English/Creative Writing from SFSU. Currently living in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, she is a co-founder and host of Prose Café, a monthly reading series, and is at work on a novel and another collection of stories. *The Paper Demon and Other Stories* is her first book.

Winner of the 2019 Many Voice Project Competition in Prose.

The Paper Demon and Other Stories is a collection of short stories from author Rosaleen Bertolino. Each story explores complex emotions, often taking readers somewhere between reality and fantasy. Shapeshifters and aliens share the pages with a traumatized widow and a homeless man, as Bertolino finds reality in the fantastic.

“Quirky, imaginative . . . otherworldly events that spark real world epiphanies.”

—Joe Ponepinto, author of *Mr. Neutron*

“Reality, meet the fierce imagination of Rosaleen Bertolino, who presents the kind of people most of us overlook, take for granted, fear, shoo away, or pity, and makes us see how it feels from their perspective. These stories are so carefully written, you will want to read slowly so as not to miss a word. The insights are interior, the mystery of relationships, family dynamics, death, love, and meanness conscientiously displayed, and timed to keep you on the alert for the next tough surprise.”

—Marianne Rogoff, author of *Love Is Blind in One Eye: 7 Stories* and *Silvie’s Life*

“What an enchanting collection! Fresh, funny, and beautifully written, these 12 inventive stories about runaways, witches, violent children and shape-changing cats absolutely delighted me. I could not stop smiling as I read, and I often had to pause and re-read for the sheer pleasure of Bertolino’s story-telling. A book to treasure.”

—Molly Giles, author of *Rough Translations*, *Creek Walk*, and *Wife with Knife*

EXCERPT from “The Doll Family”

Forbidden to wander their city neighborhood, where their parents said they might be beaten or kidnapped or chopped into tiny pieces, the three girls had no one to play with but each other. Brown-haired and plump, they were stuck together, day in, day out. Carmen, eight years old and the eldest, was bossy; the middle sister, Alice, placid; and the youngest, Bella, boisterous and loud—but those who didn’t know the girls well might not be able to tell them apart. They were like bees in a hive, birds in a nest, a set of teacups.

The dollhouse was two levels, with a pitched roof, each room wallpapered, intricately furnished with rugs and framed pictures and candlesticks and even miniature bowls of fruit. The childless neighbors who’d built and decorated the dollhouse, a man and woman, accepted small glasses of brandy from the father, observed the three girls as they tentatively touched the tiny beds, the teeny rocking chair that really rocked. Then, unsmiling, they stood and said they must be getting home. “Say thank you,” said their mother to the girls.

As soon as the grown-ups left, Carmen moved the dollhouse toilet into the dollhouse kitchen. Alice, who liked to climb, balanced the velveteen sofa and the dining room set on the roof, and Bella gnawed at the miniature bowl of red apples, which were shiny and looked delicious but tasted bitter. By the time the three sisters had finished rearranging the furniture, the dining chairs had snapped to pieces, and the braid rug in the living room, reluctant to give up its position, tore and left threads and a yellowish lump of glue behind.

The girls were disappointed in the dolls that had come with the dollhouse—a family molded of rubbery plastic that included their hair and clothes, which meant the father doll had to sleep in his suit and the children to bathe in their school clothes. The mother’s apron never came off, nor did her shoes. Imagine, never being naked or barefoot. And imagine their poo and pee. The girls laughed at how disgusting the dolls probably were under their plastic clothes. They tried putting other dolls in the dollhouse, but they were too large. Barbie lay on the floor, too tall to stand up, too big to fit on any of the furniture. She scared the dollhouse family, who ripped off her head and stewed it for dinner.

The girls’ parents, thin and glamorous with coarse, flyaway hair, had no idea what their children were up to—they were too busy arguing quietly behind their locked bedroom door. The doll parents fought, too, but differently, kicking, slapping, jumping up and down on one another, shouting, “I’ve had it up to here!” But sometimes they were almost the same as the real parents. The doll mother would hum, like their own mother did, “I’m gonna wash that man right out of my hair.” The doll father lit a pipe made from a stolen match and went, “hmm,” as the flame flared up and melted his nose.