



## The Herald of Autumn

*J.M. Guillen*

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There are things unseen in the world of men, strange things that live in the secret cracks between places. Hungry monstrosities that the sons of man cannot fathom. It is The Herald's place to hunt them, protecting us from the darkness that we cannot see.

Every year, with the death of summer, Tommy Maple, the Herald of Autumn, awakens to again wander the land. Wherever he goes, red and golden leaves follow him, and he hunts the twisted creatures in the darkness.

This Autumn, however, is different from those in the past.

Tommy awakens to the taunting of a depraved enemy, a mysterious and elusive shaman. Tommy is powerless before his strange, bent magics, and knows that the old man has slaughtered his kind in the past. He is the last person the Herald should trust. And yet, Tommy is forced to listen.

Soon, a sinister tale unfolds- a story that spans centuries and the entire continent. A story made from the whispering of forgotten legends that ends with a dark revelation. A story that Tommy has always been part of, even though he didn't know it.

Now the Herald faces an ancient abomination, unlike anything he has ever known before. For once, the hunter is the one that is hunted, chased through a misbegotten wood by a creature who seems to be little more than darkness and feckless hunger.

The behemoth is pure horror, and can unmake everything Tommy is.

As the Herald faces a foe unlike any other, will he fall to the darkness that haunts our world? Will the shadows of a lost age devour him, causing him to be reborn as one of the world's terrors? Or can he trust the shaman, a creature spun from little more than trickery, malevolence and deceit?

## **The Herald of Autumn Details**

Date : Published February 13th 2015 by Irrational Worlds (first published December 1st 2011)

ISBN :

Author : J.M. Guillen

Format : Kindle Edition 166 pages

Genre : Fantasy

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## From Reader Review The Herald of Autumn for online ebook

### Robert Defrank says

The Wild Hunt vs Cthulhu

After the apocalyptic Wormwood Event, the post-apocalyptic science fantasy of the Matter of the Red Hand and the lush and decadent fantasy world of Handmaiden's Fury, I see Guillen has tried his hand at the urban fantasy sub-genre characterized by the modern manifestation of classic fairy stories, and he excels at the field.

Readers are introduced to Tommy Maple, the Herald of Autumn and a wanderer of the fey folk of myth. Fans of Emma Bull and of Neil Gaimen's American Gods will delight in the Herald's antics and adventures in the first half of this novella as he engages with the tricks and snares of his fellow supernatural beings. The story captures the feel of a fairy denizen: playful and untamed as the wild, but with more than a hint of danger for any poor mortals who might cross his path when his mood is careless. The mood is captured flawlessly.

But this brings us to the climax, where our hero meets Coyote, another embodiment of the world's dreams and magic, and who has returned from a perilous quest for knowledge about a threat that readers of Guillen's other stories will recognize and dread.

Coyote enlists the hero's aid, and the Herald of Autumn will confront the alien forces that would plunge the world into a chaos from which no meaning, even the meaning captured by the tricks and tellings of the fey magic, can arise.

But what can the manifestation of the world's seasons and dreams do against a force that would corrode all order and spell the final end to all cycles of life?

Will even the power of the Wild Hunt be enough to fight eldritch demons from the Outer Spheres?

This is a war being fought on more fronts than I had guessed, and I eagerly await more entries into the Irrational Worlds Saga.

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### Al Burke says

A Lovecraftian mythology mash-up - <https://www.alwroteabook.com/2018/12/...>

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### David Teachout says

Beautiful. It whisks you along with all the grace and power of an autumn wind, biting at times with its chill and whispering always at more to come. The blend of myth and modern, action and love, was superbly done. Definitely want to read more.

## Meenaz Lodhi says

A compelling, gritty and unique Fae story, somewhat unexpected, worth reading the whole series!

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## liirogue says

I read this several days ago and needed some time to process it. I have never been so immersed in a world, and the author manages to do it in so few pages. Every time I had to put the book down it seemed to take me several minutes to get back to the "here and now." I was utterly transported - I could feel the breath of autumn moving through the trees, see the Herald dashing this way and that. In many ways, you are dropped into the middle of a tale. You can tell there is an intricate mythology that the author has created, and he slowly reveals bits and pieces as you go along. Not all is explained - just enough to tease you further, to draw you a little deeper into the story. This is not the book for someone that wants it all laid out. But if you like to wallow in masterfully written prose while enjoying some intriguing mythology - this is the book for you. Very highly recommended.

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## Anne Skinner says

The Herald of Autumn is a most excellent read. It reminded me somewhat (very favorably) of Charles deLint or Emma Bull, but the story very much has its own unique voice. If you enjoy being temporarily transported outside of yourself, you've got to try this. Truly enjoyable.

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## Michael says

Find yourself caught between a centuries-long struggle between spirits of the old world and the new, witness beings of faerie who can make a story real with their powers of Telling, and risk nightmares given form by what lurks in the darkness, just read this book!

This is a fantastic novella. I'm drawn to tales of old-world faeries (the kind of creatures that will steal 2 decades of your life with longing, or strip the flesh from your bones if offended), and The Herald of Autumn doesn't disappoint. Guillen crafts his writing with an amazing, poetic care that not only makes the world palpable but paints in marvelous fashion the concepts behind it: stones that have never known flight, singing in joy as they're flung from a sling; the power of a true name; and the titular Herald of Autumn himself. Descriptions of dark things encountered (both real and sent as nightmares into the main character's mind) are both imaginative and frightening: *"I saw a capering, giggling boy in the shadows, with extra joints in his fingers. They bent backwards, serpentine. He would tickle sleeping children until they bled..."* Twisted.

Within 5 minutes of finishing it, I had already told three friends to tell them to pick it up as soon as I could, and that's honestly not something I've ever done before. My only complaint--and I mean this in the best way--is that it's just a novella and not a full-length novel. Don't get me wrong, it's the perfect length for the story it tells, I was just sorry to see it end!

## **Ciar Cullen says**

I still feel a bit dreamy after reading Guillen's *The Herald of Autumn*. What a difficult book to describe. I originally read a snippet on the author's website, and was struck immediately by his unique voice and the poetic nature of the writing.

Mix folklore, very primal rhythms of nature and psychology, and stir with a twizzle stick of Stephen King (and I mean that in a good way). The writing is so fully layered that at times I wasn't sure if I was reading in a superficial way about changing seasons, as the characters are very strong, anthropomorphized timeless figures. So as you read, you're led from something that seems quite profound and then brought back to rather workaday themes--a truck rolls up, etc. The deeper you get into the story, the more story there is, and while I can't say I exactly cared about the outcome in the typical sense, I needed to finish. Guillen is definitely a skilled dreamweaver, and all I can say is that reading this book is like lucid dreaming. My mother, a person who could be moved to tears by the sound of falling acorns or a sweet Native American tale, would have LOVED this book, and I'm sad she's no longer here to share this with. I can't remember thinking that about any book. Hats off to you, Mr. Guillen.

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## **Mike Okada says**

This was an excellent read. The author uses very poetic description to capture a unique story that is filled with action and suspense. The imagery alone is fascinating, and certain scenes still reverberate in my memory. I especially enjoyed Old Man Coyote, a rich character that kept me guessing all the way through the end. *The Herald of Autumn* was a powerful story, one that I know I will revisit in the future.

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## **Joe Parrino says**

HP Lovecraft meets Fairy tales meets Native American mythology meets the fantastic.

I picked up this book on a whim, not really knowing what to expect. What I found blew me away. From the unique characters, to the complex mythology crafted and hinted at, to the history that is implied living, the book defied my expectations and left me wanting more.

The story follows Tommy Maple, the Herald of Autumn, as he awakens on the first day of Fall. From there the story builds from strength to strength and with several unexpected twists.

The prose, as has been mentioned in previous reviews, verges on the poetic. The choice of the first person perspective allows the reader to get into Tommy's head and Guillen teases the reader with Tommy's memories and the complex mythology of the world.

My only quibbles are minor. Firstly, the story left me wanting way more. Secondly, and this one is personal more than anything, was the author's repetition of the word nonce. After the first few times it got a little annoying, but was minor enough that it didn't distract from the story itself.

I recommend this story wholeheartedly and I hope Guillen writes further stories set in this universe.

## Angie says

I was not quite sure what to expect from this book. I have read my fair share of fairy tales, and was curious as to how this one would play out. It wasn't like anything I have read before, and I have to agree with a reviewer that came before me that this book reads a lot like poetry. Everything flows together into a descriptive world that you can almost smell and taste.

Tommy Maple is the herald of Autumn, which I'm sure you could have figured out from the title, called awake early he is sent on a hunt like one he has never been on. A darkness threatens the world, and one believes he is the only one that can stop it. Tired of always being alone he will find himself tempted by things he has only ever wished for in the secret part of his heart. The question is will the Hunter now become the hunted.

I liked this book quite a bit, and the cover is really what caught my eye. I'm not the kind of reader the judges by the cover. . .in my experience some of the best books can be hidden behind a truly hideous cover and some of the worst books can be behind a beauty of one. Well the cover of this one stays true and has a beautiful story behind it.

I'm not an expert in all things fairy, but I have read my fair share of stories on them. Some with them being good others with them being bad, I feel like this one falls somewhere in between. There is good intentions, and bad mixed in. You never really know if one is being honest or not. Tommy seems to fall somewhere in the middle of this mix of good and bad, he has no problem using a Telling to get the things he needs, and the hunter in him will not allow the darkness to cause harm.

I found myself feeling for Tommy in a lot that he experienced. Someone that has no home and finds himself more alone as time passes, it made me sad for him. But the simple joy he could find in things would make you smile as well. I felt that I was following behind him and experiencing everything with him at the same time.

Would I recommend this book? Yes I enjoyed it immensely

<http://zephyrbookreviews.blogspot.com/>

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## Daryl Ball says

Have you ever read a book where you finally understand the idea of words dancing across the page, painting the story they are telling? How about one where you are enraptured by the story itself, fully mesmerized and in awe? That's this book.

It follows the story of Tommy Maple, the Herald of Autumn. Steeped in a vivid world of mythology in North America. Coyote, the Old Man, seeks out Tommy Maple, for there is a dark threat growing, one Coyote can not beat. It calls upon the art of story Telling, the importance of Names, and it stitches together how things have changed for these beings in a more modern world.

It is dark and captivating, it is powerful and rich in language. I can only hope more people check this one out so that it gets the attention it deserves

## Anne says

"Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,--"

So Keats reassures Autumn, and does its Herald ever have some songs to sing in this book. Thanks to its protagonist, Tommy Maple, I won't ever pass the century-old maple in front of my house without wondering what spirit might be sleeping inside.

THE HERALD OF AUTUMN opens with a confrontation between the Herald, one of the Old World fey-kin, and Old Man Coyote, great trickster of the Native American First People. Coyote has awakened Tommy Maple a few hours before the start of his autumn reign, for a purpose that remains mysterious until after Tommy has encountered and killed a monster wearing the shape of a human but armed with raptor claws and filled with spiders. Coyote then welcomes Tommy into his deep-woods lodge and tells him of dark creatures known to the aurora-dwelling sky spirits as Shaediin. Because these creatures drink the magic Coyote calls Medicine and Tommy glamour, Coyote is helpless before them. He wants Tommy to go to the heart of a nearby shadowed wood and destroy the spawner of Shaediin that dwells there. Why Tommy? Because he is a natural hunter, capable of summoning mystical bow and quiver, horn and hounds, even a cryptic Hunter and the Great Hunt, the force of which Tommy himself fears.

Tommy and Coyote spar throughout the book with the zest of ancient enemies who can't help but admire each other. And why not? Both are great characters and the Tellers of -- literally -- bewitching tales. Guillen has a deft touch for atmosphere and an affinity for the waning season that recalls Bradbury's October Country. He also recalls Susanna Clarke in his ability to entice with the snippets of stories-within-the-story. Here are some of the visions that torment Tommy as the insanity of the Shaediin (seeping from them like nebulous poison) begins to invade his mind:

"I saw a man in the shadows, dignified and learned. Yet he was no gentleman, but a spider. His doors were in every corner of the world, and he could step to any place, leaving husks where mortals once had slept.

"I saw an old woman, with hair in her face. She would crawl along the floor, like a crab, muttering and whispering numbers. She knew the day of everyone's death.

"I saw a capering, giggling boy in the shadows, with extra joints in his fingers. They bent backwards, serpentine. He would tickle sleeping children until they bled, and then feast on the blood with a long, forked tongue."

Wow. Layers upon layers of tantalizing darkness, each a story in miniature.

Guillen's style is poetic without pretense, his grasp of the fairy tale form firm. He knows that the power of story lies at least partly in its circularity, as the great patterns repeat themselves in form after form, life after life. Or, as Tommy Maple tells us, at the start, at the end:

"I have one thousand beginnings. No. That's not right. Nigh a thousand thousand. Each stranger than the last...."

## **A.M. says**

Put this down and haven't looked at it again in a month - or even felt tempted to pick it back up. Doubt I'll ever finish it.

I wasn't sure what to expect but the reviews raised my hopes. Sadly, 30% of the way into the book I am still struggling to enjoy it.

At certain times the poetic writing tempts me, other times it comes off as laboured - a "literary" mythological fantasy more concerned with aesthetics than telling a story. (Ironic, given the role of story-telling in this book.) The world and setting also seem intriguing, but they alone aren't sufficient to draw me in.

The main character might be a complex, magical being... but a third of the way in, I still am confused about who/what he is and why I should care about him. Ditto applies to the villain.

I have to admit, things did start getting interesting - with the villain and the protagonist meeting a second time, there seemed to be a promise that the story would kick off. But it came too late for me.

I wanted to like this book, but the execution put me off.

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## **Autumn says**

This book was absolutely beautiful. I agree with the other reviews that it does read like poetry and I loved that.

It was like a fairytale, but different than any fairytale I've read before in a wonderful, spellbinding way.

J.M. Guillen has an amazing gift for weaving words together to hold you in an ethereal cocoon and keep you hypnotized until the book ends.

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