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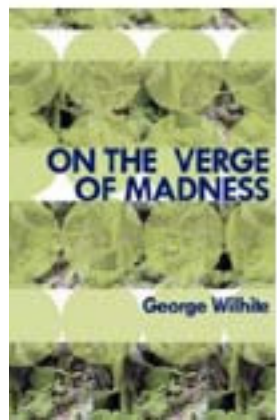
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**On The Verge of Madness by George Wilhite (Review by Kerri Silva)**

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[http://www.horrorbound.com/print.php?type=A&item\\_id=137](http://www.horrorbound.com/print.php?type=A&item_id=137) (1 of 2)9/21/2009 7:42:02 AM Horror Bound Online Magazine

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“On the Verge of Madness” by George Wilhite is a collection of disturbing stories that will send shivers down your spine. This book will make you think about and fear the person next to you on the bus even well after you put it down.

“Victor Chaldean and the Portal” is the first story in Wilhite’s “Fractured Realms” series of stories. It focuses on a self-described skeptic whose wife disappears and he agrees to participate in an experiment into the paranormal out of desperation, not realizing how completely it would turn his life upside down. The ending is shocking, but not more so than the journey there. The series gets off to a good start here, and more stories will be gobbled up by fans of both psychological and supernatural horror.

“Checks and Balances” is a story of a recovering alcoholic who makes a deal with a supernatural trickster. The story is about unforeseen circumstances more so than dire happenings, but the problems that arise from the main characters pact seem more like the laws of karmic justice. He is a sympathetic character and the reader feels sorrow for him nonetheless.

“A Plea from the Cradle” is a chilling tale narrated by a prisoner of his own body who wishes to communicate but cannot. His hopes for contact are constantly averted by circumstances beyond his control. The ending is somewhat reminiscent of “A Brave New World” and will horrify readers at the level of cruelty humans can achieve so calmly.

"A Tale of Two Moons" is a story about a wolf who changes at the New Moon with the help of a shaman for revenge against the white man for the murder of his litter and mate. When he discovers an innocent girl who does not fear him, it may be the end to his vengeance except for her protective father. The plot is interesting, but it feels rushed and as if it ended too soon. The shaman, even though he never takes direct action, is a vital part of the story. This character should have been more fully developed. However, this is a good werewolf story that fans of the genre would more than enjoy.

"Masque Profane" is the story of a woman who wonders where her husband goes every Halloween. She finds more than she bargained for when she follows him one year, and it has disastrous results in both of their lives. The protagonist is a strong independent woman, which makes the ending even more surprising when she seemingly goes mad. The consummation of her apparent madness is gruesome and yet even the audience does not know whether it was truly justified or simply a result of the trauma she suffered that fateful night. This story will make the reader think and leave them wondering about the state of her sanity.

This eclectic collection is a must for fans of dark fiction. The "Tales of the Fractured Realms" series has great potential to be a fantastic group of stories dealing with the darker side of humanity. The other stories are also wonderful in their ability to surprise and shock the reader. It is no surprise that some of these stories have already won acclaim and recognition in this genre.

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