

# *Genius & Loci*

TALES OF  
THE SPIRIT  
OF PLACE

Edited by  
Jaym Gates

GENIUS LOCI: TALES OF THE SPIRIT OF PLACE

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**Sample file**

## — EDITOR'S NOTE —

Jaym Gates

When Brooke Bolander and I started discussing the weird *genius loci* of the places we grew up in a Facebook thread, we had no idea it would turn into an anthology (yes, I feel like this is a recurring theme). The concept of *genius loci* is something close to both of us. Brooke talks about her background in the introduction.

My background was as weird and rural, set in Northern California to her Texas. Clark Ashton Smith, Jack London, and Mark Twain all took inspiration from the area I grew up in. The hills there are known colloquially as *Calabama*, a strange mix of the Deep South, the Wild West, and remote mountains.

My hometown still relies on logging, mining, and ranching to keep it afloat. If our horses got off our property, they could get lost for weeks in the government-owned wildlands behind us. Family trips were spent in Death Valley, the Desolation Wilderness, and other remote locations. The ranchers rode with guns on their saddles, and when fires swept the mountains near my town last year, ranchers loaded horses and dogs into their trailers and headed into mountain meadows to try to rescue the stock.

When I was ten or so, the bridge on our road washed out, leaving us with only a single way out: a treacherous, muddy road winding back through the hills. When I was eighteen months old, an unseasonable snowstorm nearly trapped my family in the mountains during a backpacking trip.

I respect the land, and have learned to listen when it speaks. It turns out that I'm not the only one. A lot of people jumped on the conversation, telling their own stories and asking for recommendations for reading. I was sure there had to be a dozen anthologies with this theme already, but, to my surprise, we seemed to be the first.

Authors started signing up, and a beast was born. Ragnarok Publications agreed to take a chance on it, and a brilliant team of slushers, advisors, and supporters shaped up around it.

It was a challenge to wrangle from the start. We received almost a million words in submissions, and the quality was amazingly high. Pretty sure I could have published three or four anthologies and all of

them would have been good. But I didn't have that much room, and I had to whittle it down to the 111,000 words you're about to read.

A collection like this is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for an editor. It's a dream project, something I was able to take a risk producing. The Kickstarter goals focused on giving the authors more, making the project better and bigger and lusher, rather than on giving the backers a lot of physical stuff. It could easily have failed, although it is now becoming a nicely common Kickstarter strategy.

It's a diverse, eclectic collection. Some of the stories won't read as a genius loci story the first time around. Some are challenging, some are scary, or bleak. Many are based on real events. Some were strangely prophetic.

Take, for example, Ken Liu's *Snow Train*. He sent this story to me in the summer of 2014. The real Snow Train hadn't been brought out for years. Winter 2014, Boston was buried in a record-breaking snowstorm, and the train was brought out to help break Boston's public transit system out of the snow packs. Maybe it wouldn't have broken down if Charlie had been operating it.

Not every story will resonate with you, and that's okay. But I firmly believe that each story will resonate with *someone*, that each has something to say about our world and its strange spirits.

I hope, if nothing else, that it makes you look at the world around you and wonder what, *who*, is watching you.

Jaym Gates  
August, 2014