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To give you a sampling of these stories, let's start with G. Clemans' "Escape from Old Yorktown." A Seattle art and design instructor, Clemans recently has turned to writing apocalyptic fiction. Her inclusion in this anthology marks her debut as a published writer of fiction.

The story is set in Old Yorktown, a faux Victorian-era village reconstructed on Earth following a Nuclear Fusion Incident "way back in 2101."

To teenage Lizzie, whose mom manages Old Yorktown as a living history museum, it is just a hokey tourist trap for visitors from around the galaxy, a place "where misplaced sentimentality and technological repression are alive and well." It's especially unbearable at Christmastime, when Lizzie is pressed into service as a hoop-skirted, bonneted caroler.

But when the good-looking son of the Galaxy President crash-lands in Yorktown and enlists Lizzie to help him evade the security detail coming after him, she begins to realize that behind those anachronistic storefronts, her town holds deep secrets.

This is a nice mashup of cozy mystery and science fiction.

Seattle writer Raven Oak's "The Ringers" is a winter's tale of a town that is held in the thrall of a demented Yuletide tradition. The Ringers are fearsome, horse-



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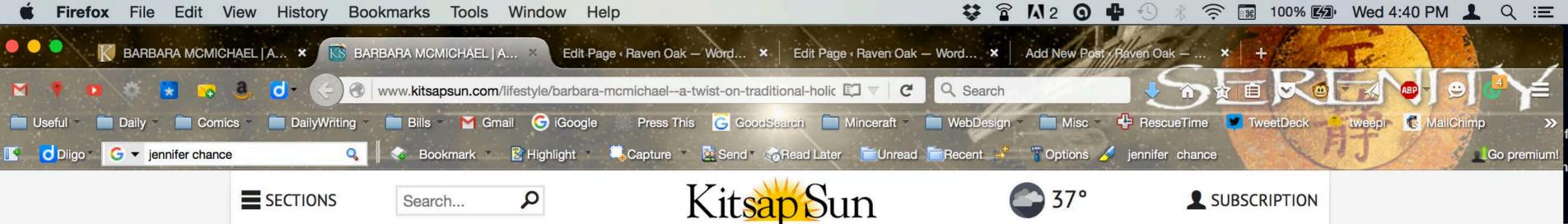












Seattle writer Raven Oak's "The Ringers" is a winter's tale of a town that is held in the thrall of a demented Yuletide tradition. The Ringers are fearsome, horseriding specters that annually terrorize the populace during the darkest days of winter. (You may never hear jingle bells in the same way again!)

When Elise moves into town with her family, she is loathe to bow to their reign of terror, but she has few resources at her disposal to combat them.

This story may compel readers to think about issues such as access to information, and how to effect change when confronted with entrenched social, political, and economic systems. It is a gripping and disturbing read.

In a similar vein, best-selling historical mystery author Maia Chance, based in Bellingham, has written "Odysseus Flax & the Krampus." This steampunk tale brings Odysseus, a train-traveling thief, into a snowy alpine village on Krampusnacht, where he has a reckoning with the local boogeyman.

"Joy to the Worlds" won't be for everyone, but it definitely offers a spunky alternative to traditional holiday fare.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes on books, authors and publishers of the Northwest. She can be reached at bkmonger@nwlink.com.

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