

Story Bytes

Very Short Stories - Lengths a power of 2.

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Story Bytes

Very Short Stories
Lengths a Power of 2

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**Story Bytes better
than sound bites.**

An Answer to Prayer

M. Stanley Buben

“U^{m... no.}” [2]

Toys 'R' Us Philosophy

Adam Keeble

“**W**hy would Superman need a car?” asked Senior. “You think one day suddenly he can’t leap tall buildings? And in Metropolis, he would have to deal with switching his car to the other side of the street twice a week. Then there’s the congestion. ‘Sorry crime-victim. I would have been here sooner, but Fifth Avenue was at a standstill.’

“And this car is clearly more than a lowly reporter could afford. De Lorean wouldn’t have made a car this elaborate. Superman logo tailfins for crying out loud! Just think of the insurance!”

Junior put the box back on the shelf without saying a word—paused briefly—then picked up another.

“A Spiderman helicopter!” sighed Senior.

Junior looked up at his father.

“Spiderman can’t fly,” he said. [128]

Dancing on a Pin

Gary E. Holland

We had never talked of religion, but we often talked of marriage. She was an old world princess whose ancestors had been guillotined in the center of Paris. I was a new age fashion designer whose ancestors had been machine-gunned on the outskirts of Cracow. What did we care? We were in love.

Somewhere near the mellow end of a bottle of Beaujolais the bells of the Cathedral of Notre Dame suddenly sounded. And, as if in reply, she said something about the “infinite power of faith.”

“Hey,” I said from my new age innocence, “one man’s religion is the next man’s nonsense.”

It happened so fast I didn’t see it coming. Something slammed hard against my arm then landed belly up before the gaping balcony doors. Her family Bible lay flat on its back opened somewhere between the Old and the New Testament. Its tissue-thin pages flipped and fluttered aimlessly in the summer night’s breeze blowing off the river Seine while she cursed me in low French using words I had not yet learned.

I remember laying alone on the sofa that night trying to fall asleep with a throbbing wrist while pondering the surprising force behind those fragile pages filled with all the precious answers for which millions had fought to the death: Is God one, none, or many? Here, there, or nowhere? Who are the righteous? Who are the damned? And how many angels really can dance on the head of a pin?

Next morning we never spoke of religion or marriage again. [256]

Fleeing Miss Horace

Lad Moore

Daddy was the hardest working man I ever knew or even heard about. Sometimes he tilled his vineyards with a hoe in one hand and a pick in the other. His arms were like Popeye's—big as watermelons. His words were about the same size.

* * *

That Friday night we listened to “Amos ‘n Andy” on the radio and Daddy said it was bedtime—reminding me we had a load of peaches to haul the next day.

I was stricken with radio slapstick comedy as I lay under the summer quilt that Momma weighted me down with. The Kingfish had rattled off some good lines—like the one about *simonizing his watch* with Andy's.

As I lay there it occurred to me that the laundry box of Tide on the kitchen counter read “idiot,”—spelled backwards. I laughed out loud—trying to muffle the noise with my feather pillow. First, Daddy warned me to be quiet. I giggled on. Then he entered my room—just a shadow in his nightshirt and nightcap—something Santa might sleep in. But in his hand was his tired leather belt, not the reins to a sleigh. He brandished it a couple of times—swatting the palm of his mitt-sized hand. Magically the box said Tide again and my joke dissolved in the darkness.

I loved our farm with its acres of orchards and vineyards. Daddy fenced it with barbwire, five feet high. The fence was to keep animals out, but it kept me out too—until I was five. Then I learned how to climb the stiles—wooden ladders shaped like an a-frame that straddled the fence.

In five-year-old innocence I asked, “Daddy, why can't cows and pigs climb like I do to get in? It's *real* easy, they could just lift one hoof above another.”

“As a rule, cows stay off ladders,” he said, “they just sit around chewing their cud, waiting to grow their wings.” Cows and pigs with wings! That prospect was funnier than my Tide joke. I laughed, but I wasn't absolutely

sure he was kidding.

* * *

When I was seventeen, I fell in love with Miss Horace, who was our neighbor Clyde Oberman's semi-beautiful daughter. It was a feisty courtship, and Mr. Oberman threw bricks at me the last time I came to call on her.

We decided to elope—our only hope of being together.

Midnight came on the night of the plan. I moved daddy's ladder under her bedroom window. Miss Horace tossed out an overstuffed duffel bag, then stepped out onto the ladder. It creaked and groaned from her substantial size. I read somewhere you're not supposed to see the bride before the wedding. But as I steadied the ladder, I saw everything. Her skirt billowed out like the filled sail of a brigantine. The sight of all that weighty paraphernalia under there terrified me.

Suddenly, Daddy's words poured over me like warm concrete. "*As a rule, cows stay off ladders.*"

I'm the one that grew wings. I was still running at sunup. [512]