

# Story Bytes

**Very Short Stories - Lengths a power of 2.**

Issue #61 - May 2001

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# Story Bytes

Very Short Stories  
Lengths a Power of 2

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**Story Bytes better  
than sound bites.**

# The Counterrevolutionary Saves a Nation

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M. Stanley Buben

“U<sup>nite!</sup>”  
“Why?” [2]

# Amendment I: Freedom of Speech (And All the Rights and Privileges Thereof)

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M. Stanley Bubien

“**H**ey! You there! Stop! Listen! No, wait... Listen...” [8]

# LOSS

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Gene Schmidt

“**S**he thought, “That’s him, ambling up the driveway. Sloshing snow in his boots, as usual.”  
“Leave those boots out on the porch,” she was ready to tell him, “shake the snow off your jacket.”

Hot soup, dry clothes, an hour of television. And a story. She would have rocked him to sleep in her arms.

But it was only sunlight reflecting off of snow. [64]

# Pretty in Pink

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Lorraine M. Gregoire

“**Y**ou’re nuts. I can’t walk that far. No way!” I was mad at my girlfriend. Some guy she met at seniors had invited her to a “mall-walkers” group.

“I won’t go alone. Please, please... pretty please” It bugs me when she’s sucky. I can never say no. “I’ve been so lonely since Walter died...” Low blow. That forlorn widow’s lament always gets me.

Sheesh. It’s just two years for her. My John’s been gone ten and I’m not out chasing men up and down the malls like a moose in heat.

So, here we are. Dumb and dumber in sneakers and jogging suits. The meeting place is some donut shop.

“Oh look, there’s the guy! Yoo-hoo!” My girlfriend’s acting cuckoo. This is embarrassing. Forty gray heads turn and stare.

“We’re ready to streetwalk with you’all.” Man, she’s gushing and giggling. Not very sad lonely widow-like of her.

Bah! Women outnumber the men. Smiling, flirty old broads. And why are the girls all pudgy and these walkie-talkie guys all skinny?

Probably here looking for someone to cook for them. Pompous peacocks.

“Here’s your name badges and a mall discount card—get the senior’s discount every day. Welcome, welcome...”

My girlfriend is hanging on this silver-tongued creep’s every word—but he keeps looking over at me. Now he’s SMILING at me!

Shoot. I’m smiling back. Should’ve worn my pink sweats—I look best in pink. Oh dear, he looks a bit like my John... Not at all like her Walter.

I wonder if he likes home cooking... [256]

# Salad Noir

Isabelle Carruthers

Dismissing the uniformed officer, Detective Carl Lambeth ushered the young woman into the interrogation room. The fragrance of her expensive perfume sweetened the air and masked the stench of the prisoner who preceded her.

“Can I get you a coffee? Water?”

“No, thank you, Detective.” She smiled pleasantly and smoothed the blood-smeared cuff of her ivory blouse. A tendril of auburn hair fell across her forehead as she glanced down at her watch.

“I’d hope we can finish quickly. I’d like to get to the hospital.”

“Of course.” Lambeth cleared his throat and loosened his tie. He was always happy to get down to business.

“You understand that your statements can be used against you in a court of law, and you have the right to an attorney during questioning. You wish to make your statement without your lawyer present?”

“Oh yes, I’ve nothing to hide.” She waved her hand as if banishing a pesky fly. “Really, this is all just a big misunderstanding.”

“Alright then, Miss, um, Renfrew. May I call you Leslie?”

“Yes, please do.”

“This... Mr. Cooper, he’s your...?”

“My boyfriend. We’re getting married in April.” She managed a tremulous

smile and toyed with the emerald-cut diamond on her left hand.

“How long have you been involved with the vi—um, Mr. Cooper?”

“We’ve been dating about three years.”

“How would you characterize your relationship? Get along well?”

“Yes, just the usual disagreements.”

“Tonight there was... an argument?”

“Oh, we weren’t having an actual argument.”

“No?”

“Really, this was all just... just an accident.”

“Can you describe what happened?”

“Well, Timothy has a thing for knives.”

“He collects them, you mean? A collector?” Lambeth began to make notes on his pad.

“Not exactly. Just that he’s very proud of his cutlery.” She laughed softly, as if he would understand exactly what she meant.

“Cutlery.” Lambeth repeated after her and raised his eyebrows, wondering if he had misunderstood.

“You know, kitchen utensils. Especially his knives. He’s very serious about them.”

“I see. Go on.” Lambeth twirled his pen, intrigued.

“Well, we were making dinner. I was slicing tomatoes for the salad, and he started complaining that I was using the wrong knife. It happens all the time.”

“The wrong knife? He nags you about the knives?”

“Yes. I was using a steak knife. Timothy said it wasn’t right for slicing tomatoes.”

“I see. And what happened next?”

“Well, I said, ‘It cuts the stupid tomatoes doesn’t it?’ But he wouldn’t shut up, so I grabbed another knife to finish.”

“Oh?” Lambeth suppressed a smile.

“Yes. This time he insisted that the knife I was using was for deboning fish and chickens, and demanded that I stop. But it’s very sharp. Sliced tomatoes beautifully. So I just ignored him.”

“I see. And then what happened?”

“Nothing. I finished slicing the tomatoes and the cucumber. Then I started peeling the avocado.”

“Avocado. And... he didn’t like that?”

“No. He started bitching about how I was going to ruin the blade, and he

handed me the vegetable peeler, kind of rolling his eyes. But it didn’t work well. You know how thick the skin of an avocado is.”

“And then?” “Well. Things got a little tense. He made a funny noise, like he was choking. And he tried to grab it. That’s when it stuck in his hand.”

“The vegetable peeler?”

“No, no. The fillet knife.”



“Oh, right. I see. So when the knife went through his palm, that was self-inflicted?” Lambeth scribbled on his pad.

“Yes, it was. So then, I told him to peel the damned avocado himself. And I decided to go ahead and eat because during all of this my steak was getting cold. But since he had the steak knife, I grabbed the paring knife to cut my steak. He became very belligerent.”

“What happened next?”

“He took the knife away. And he was trying to show me that the paring knife isn’t really sharp enough to cut meat. He was testing it on his leg, trying to cut through his jeans, you know? But he stuck it in his thigh. Started bleeding all over the place. It was a nasty cut. Proving he was wrong, obviously.”

“Obviously. And then what happened?”

“Well, I was pretty annoyed. And I still needed to slice my steak. And there was just the bread knife now because he’d taken the others, so I picked it up and started towards the dining room. But Timothy had this crazy look on his face, and he just suddenly lunged at me. I was just holding the bread knife and he just kind of, well, impaled himself on it. It happened so fast.” Her green eyes filled with tears and she sniffed loudly.

“And the vegetable peeler? How exactly did that become embedded in Mr. Cooper’s forehead?”

“Well, I’m not real clear on that.” Leslie pressed her hands flat on the table and frowned, as if struggling to recall those recent events. “He came at me with the fillet knife, but he was sort of staggering around. After all, he had that bread knife sticking out of his chest. He might have slipped on the blood, I suppose. The linoleum was pretty slippery by then.”

“I see. And that’s it?”

“Yes. He seemed like he was in pretty bad shape then, so I called the ambulance.”

“And that’s it? There’s nothing else you’d like to add?”

“No, I think that’s everything. It really was just an accident, as you can tell.”

“Well. I’m afraid we’ll have to let the judge sort this out. I mean, it’s pretty hard to believe that all those injuries were self-inflicted.”

“You don’t know Timothy. He’s very serious about his utensils.”

“Yes, well...if this is it, then I’ll let you sign this and we’ll take you

downstairs for processing. You might want to call your attorney now.”

“If you feel it’s necessary. But, just one thing...about the knives?”

“Yes?”

Leslie leaned over the table with an earnest expression. “You’ll take care of them, right? Make sure no one puts them in the dishwasher, would you? That makes him absolutely insane.” [1024]