

Story Bytes

Very Short Stories - Lengths a power of 2.

Issue #63 - July 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 Good, the Bad and the Ugly (A Modern Day Western)

M. Stanley Bubien

“**I**’m enlightened,” I state unequivocally to no-one, avoiding a glance. “I did my part for the Indians’—er... ahem... Native Americans’—independence. After all, I voted for their Casinos!”

My focus wanders from the freeway ahead, and, to compensate, I depress the accelerator. I fly past the three-fold billboards vying for my attention, but not before catching their united inscription: “Loosest Slots in California.” [64]

“Meno y Rosa”

M. Stanley Bubien

“Our love,” Meno, 12, thought as he brandished his mini-switchblade, “Forever!” Leaning sideways to block the receptionist’s view, he began carving his message onto the chair’s wooden rest.

“Meno!” his mother whisper-commanded upon reentering from the nurse’s station, “Vamanos!”

Twisting the blade closed with two fingers, Meno grinned, for he had completed his lover’s inscription—a permanent scar in the oaken arm—at just that moment. “Fate,” he realized.

Strolling down the corridor, he pondered Rosa, only Rosa. Not even the extraordinarily porcine woman sloshing toward the doctor’s office drew Meno’s attention away from his love.

The elevator dinged its arrival. Politely, Meno allowed an elderly couple to totter aboard. “Destiny awaits!” Meno considered the aged pair, and the sliding doors perfectly masked a distant crack of shattering oak. [128]

Excuses

Lynn Gordon

“**B**ut Mom, you promised!” “I know dear, but things don’t always work out the way we planned.”

After an extremely exhausting day at the office, the last thing I wanted to do right now was go swimming.

“But Mom, you promised!”

“I know, but I’m just too tired. Maybe we can go tomorrow instead.”

“You never keep your promises.”

“Yes I do. Sometimes it takes me awhile to keep them, but you know we will eventually go swimming.”

“But you said we could go today.”

“And when tomorrow is today, we will.”

“Oh alright, but don’t forget you promised.”

“Don’t worry dear, I won’t”

As I settled down to relax for awhile, I marvelled at the general stupidity of mothers. Why we insist on teaching our children things like “you should never tell a lie,” and “you should always keep your promises” is a mystery. We all know it will come back to haunt us eventually.

Perhaps we are all somewhat masochistic, and need to have the occasional guilt trip laid on us by our children when we don’t live up to our own expectations. Whatever the reason, I would welcome a course in creatively “skirting the issue and confusing your children.” Just think, when my children are grown and gone, I could quit my office job and run for politics. Maybe I could start an advice column for families, or write books on creative parenting, or...

I sighed as I suddenly realized, visions of grandeur aside, I still have ten years of excuses to go! [256]

Two Men With Perfectly Good Views

Ben O'Grady

There are two men sitting across from one another in a coffee shop, sitting in the corner at a two-person table which is flanked by other people at their own tables—customers, patrons, ‘clientele’ in service industry parlance—two men with hot steamy mugs of coffee clasped between gnarled workman’s hands and resting on the table in a line that nearly perfectly bisects their chests and are approximately in the same line together, they stare at each other, pointedly into each other’s eyes in a fashion that people who are not completely comfortable and accommodated with one another would find discomfiting, disconcerting, disturbing; they stare at each other unblinkingly and without consciousness of themselves or those around them. Both men are oldish, graying, balding in one case, heavily bespectacled in the other, dressed in muted colored sweaters and slacks that are neither cheap looking nor fashionable, these two could be any two older men really, they continue to stare through their lined faces and rosy jowls and healthy, non-bloodshot and intelligent eyes directly at each other with about as neutral an expression as you can find in this environment, all straight-lipped and relaxed foreheads and brows, the man with the glasses in no way letting his eyewear interfere with his laser-like gaze. They do not move at all. They are statues. Their stares are physical things, like sharpened stakes, aimed at each other. People nearby notice but say nothing. The two men are ages 56 and 62, respectively, and their sexuality is not in question.

Eventually, one of them speaks:

“I have made no connection.” [256]

The Night of Iniquity

Heather Macpherson

Robert Dradbor III only ever dresses in a black, perfectly pressed button-down shirt with a red and black-checked bow tie, brown, pleated slacks, white socks, brown loafers and a brown sports jacket with green patches at the elbow. He smokes a chestnut-colored pipe with a black tip and reads Robert Frost by the light of a tall silver lamp with a 75-watt light bulb and a forest green shade, sitting in his black leather recliner, sipping brandy from a squat sparkling glass. Robert Dradbor III is a partner at a prestigious law firm in New York and makes 250,000 dollars a year. He lives with his wife, Lucinda, their two children, Dominique and Daniel and a yapping terrier named Petey.

Beneath Robert Dradbor III's perfectly pressed, impeccable daily uniform lies the secret that makes him feel pretty: A red, intricately stitched brassier with tiny black flowers on the cups and a little bow at the center. Matching red panties hide beneath his brown pleated pants. These frilly under-things were presents from his mistress, Tabitha, who works days in the children's section of the local library and keeps her long brown hair in a tight bun at the nape of her neck and buttons her white blouses to the hollow of her throat. Tabitha owns the sleaziest bar in town and works nights as a dominatrix and topless dancer. Robert Dradbor III is a frequent patron of her fine establishment.

When Robert Dradbor III sits to eat his dinner it is always the same. His family may vary their dinner but he insists upon the same thing every night. A large, medium-rare sirloin steak, three potatoes, fourteen green beans, a half of a peach, exactly thirty-two peas, a corn on the cob and peach cobbler for dessert. After which he retires to read in the den while his wife and children bore themselves to sleep. Every third week, every three months, as soon as their heads touch the pillow, Robert Dradbor III strolls casually out of the white front door of their Tudor-style home and transforms into a black panther with blue eyes, shedding clothing and red under garments at the front door to be collected upon his return.

Black Panther prowls city streets, feasting on rats and small homeless children. He runs directly to the local zoo, leaps over the fence and hunts

zebra in their confines and although it isn't much of a hunt, Black Panther is satiated. He slinks through central park looking for young lovers to either kill or scare and is rarely disappointed. He passes the night in devilish delight, as his soul's owner would want. Black Panther must please or Robert Dradbor III will no longer be a master of universe in fine clothes, rolling in money and power. And, although Black Panther would be satisfied to roam the night forever conquering and devouring, Robert Dradbor III pulls the panther in at dawn's first light and appears to be asleep in bed just as his wife, Lucindais, pretty green eyes flutter open to a new day. [512]