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FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020

FEATURING

The Rise of Short Stories

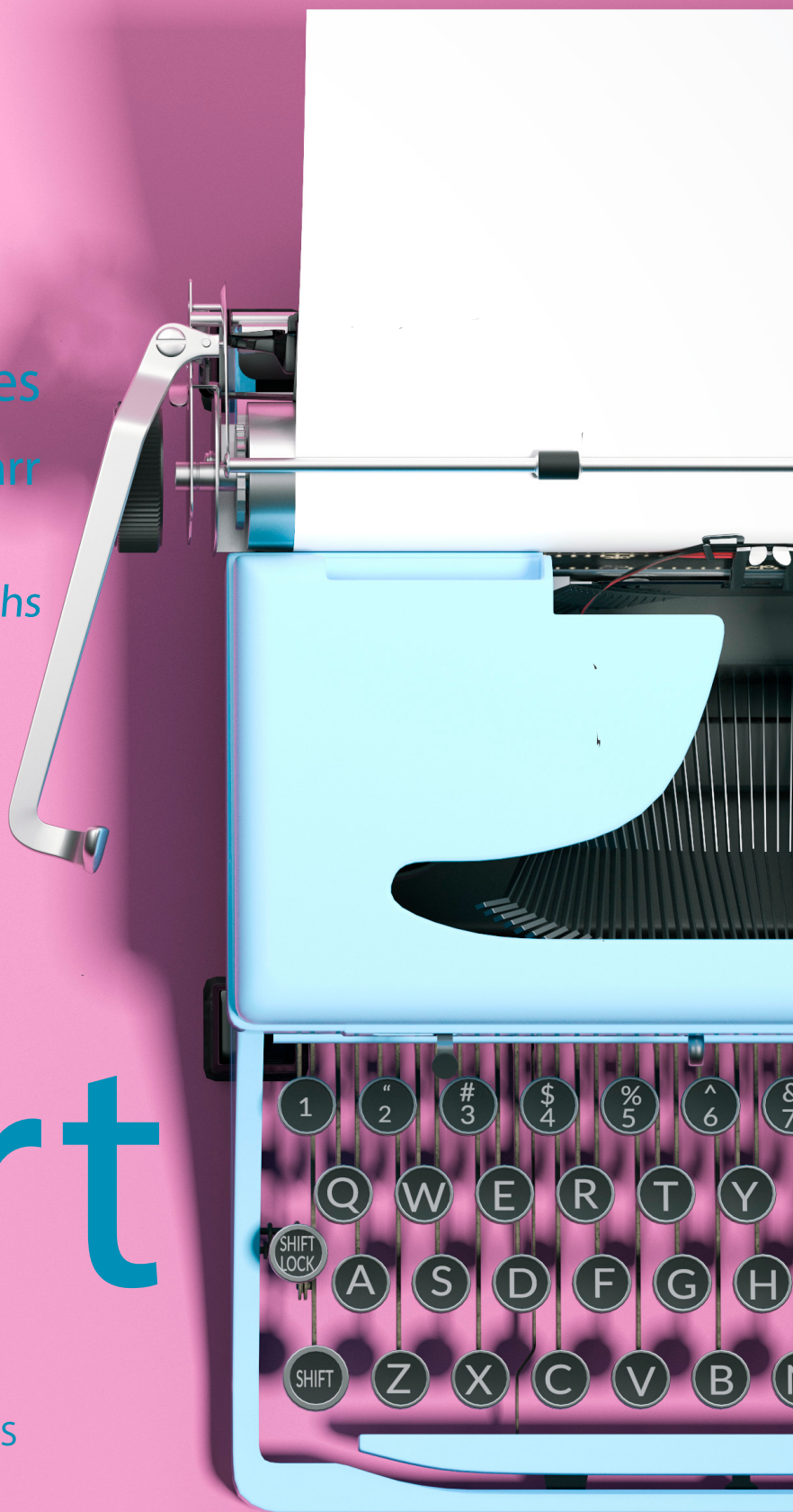
Interview with Melissa Marr

Behind The Scenes: Short
Answers with Short Storysmiths

Excerpts of New Short Stories

DEBUT
Short
Stories

BY
INDIE
AUTHORS



WHAT TO READ NEXT IN INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING



Tacoma Stories.

BY RICHARD WILEY

READ AN EXCERPT

“Your profile said you moved down here recently,” he said. “How’s it going so far? I’ve been here for twenty years myself.”

He could feel himself pushing, and placed his fingers on the stem of his wineglass. She was actually prettier than her profile photos. When did that ever happen? Angela had told him that he looked like Tony Curtis in his profile photo, while Angelo said he looked more like General Curtis Lemay. Angelo was a World War II historian and also taught at Berkeley. Angelo had bullets from the Battle of the Bulge on his desk, which was what he’d been fighting all these years, Angela said.

“It’s an experiment, moving here,” she said. “I thought I could leave Tacoma behind, but I’ve brought it with me. Any fool could have guessed that would happen, but I’m not any fool. As you

can see, I’m a very specific one.”

Neither of them had any idea what that meant, but it was certainly true that Tacoma sat within her like a bullfrog on a lily pad, croaking away. Now, however, it was her turn to ask him something. That was the unwritten rule of Internet dating. “Have you ever thought of buying one of those rotating eyebrow cutters?” came to mind, but she said instead, “Your profile listed your field as organic chemistry. When I was in college, organic chemistry used to scare the living shit out of me.”

She paused, sorry for “living shit,” then added, “You know, I have this theory that scientists often know the arts but that artists never know the sciences. Would you say that’s true? Tell me something artistic, why don’t you?”



She pressed the fingers of both her hands into the tablecloth. She’d never thought of herself as mean, but there it was.

“Actually, I think Beth suits you better than Mary or Liz,” he said. “You have the softness of the th around your eyes.”

He’d been thinking of saying that the whole time she’d been talking. He’d never said anything remotely flirtatious on his other dates, but Angela had

told him just that morning to loosen up, to tell the woman she was pretty if he thought so, to tell her whatever came to mind.

When she peaked her own eyebrows at him, he said, “In Chemistry Th stands for thorium. It was discovered in 1828 by Jöns Jacob Berzelius of Sweden. He named it after Thor, the Norse god of thunder.”

“Glad you cleared that up for me, or I might have thought he named it after John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt,” said Liz or Mary or Beth.

Oh God, she had to stop this. None of it was his fault. Except, of course, for the outdated photos on his profile. There ought to be a

rule about those, some sort of statute of limitations. She said rather wistfully, “You’ve never been married, have you?”

“Married to my profession” was his usual reply, but something in the way she’d made fun of Jöns Jacob Berzelius made him turn off the tape recorder in his head. What did it matter what she thought of him?


“I had a close call once with the woman who is now my sister-in-law,” he said, “but she chose Angelo and now we’re friends. That is, not Angelo and I but Angela and I.”

“Here’s to close calls,” she said, once more raising her glass. She reached across the table and tapped his wrist, as



if saying, Hello in there, hello? Can we not both simply stop this, act like human beings for once in our lives?

“What about you?” he asked. “Are you still in love with your dead husband?”

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ABOUT THE BOOK

TACOMA STORIES

On St. Patrick's Day in 1968, sixteen people sit in Pat's Tavern, drink green beer, flirt, rib each other, and eventually go home in (mostly) different directions. In the stories that follow, which span 1958 to the present, Richard Wiley pops back into the lives of this colorful cast of characters—sometimes into their pasts, sometimes into their futures—and explores the ways in which their individual narratives indelibly weave together. At the heart of it all lies Tacoma, Washington, a town full of eccentricities and citizens as unique as they are universal. The Tacoma of Tacoma Stories might be harboring paranoid former CIA operatives and wax replicas of dead husbands, but it is also a place with all the joys and pains one could find in any town, anytime and anywhere.

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