

COLLECTION OF DRABBLES AND DRIBBLES
FROM A SHORT STORY WORKSHOP

LONG
STORY
SHORT

englist

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A SHORT STORY IS A SPECIAL KIND OF ART

FOREWORD BY NADJA JUKIČ

In poetry, there are rhymes, rhythm, poetic devices. In novels, plot, settings, characterization. At its best, a short story is a mix of both. It unites the elements of poetry and prose, creating a fictional world unlike any other. Brief, mysterious, even shocking. It throws you in the deep end and cuts short right as you finally swim to the surface.

In other words, most short stories begin in medias res, in the middle of the action, and end abruptly, usually on a cliff-hanger. These are two characteristics often attributed to short stories, though there are in fact no hard and fast rules when it comes to short story writing. The length should be somewhere between 1,000 and 10,000 words; all other aspects are open to interpretation. Generally, short stories observe the “unity of effect:” choosing a simplified setting, one main plotline with no subplots, and only a handful of characters, which helps authors evoke a single mood or feeling. But this is by no means a given. 10,000-word short stories will resemble short novels, and develop their narratives along entirely different lines than those of 1,000 words or fewer, which belong to a category of their own.

These shortest short stories, also referred to as “flash fiction,” are essentially short stories in a nutshell. They can range anywhere from 5 to 1,000 words, with special terms used for those fewer than a 100 words (a “drabble”) and those fewer than 50 (a “dribble”). It is drabbles and dribbles we tried our hands at during our short story workshop, and here are the results.



PUPPIES AND REINCARNATION

WRITTEN BY NADICA TRAJKOVA

“This is your first time?”

“Huh?”

“Is this the first time attending your own funeral?”

“You’re telling me this sort of thing happens more than once?”

“Well, if you want to, yeah. You look smart enough to know about reincarnation.”

“Okay, so what do I do? I just squeeze my eyes shut and imagine what I wanna be?”

“More or less. You don’t have to sit in front of your own coffin and look depressed, it’s sad to look at you honestly.”

“Alright, I want to be a puppy.”

“What?”

“My dog is pregnant; I want to see my family again.”



1

THOUGHTS OF ARSON

BY DOMINIK LENARČIČ

He held the lit match between his fingers. Up to his house led a wet gasoline trail, anxious to ignite. All it would take was a drop of the flame. While he did grow up in that quaint residence, he was only bound to it by a miniscule number of blissful memories. The rest were better off forgotten. With so little attachment, the house would not stand for long.

His knees were starting to buckle. His fingers were getting itchy. "C'mon," he whispered to himself. "Don't chicken out now. Drop it." Too many unspoken criticisms. Too many cries stifled in his heart. No more cowardice. No more playing chicken with sanity. "Drop the fucking match."

His knees finally bent. The flame was dangerously close to the gasoline now. All he needed to do was move his fingers. He paused; one of those blissful memories came back. It was of playing in the backyard with his mother when he was a child. Such calm. Such unfiltered joy. Such bliss.

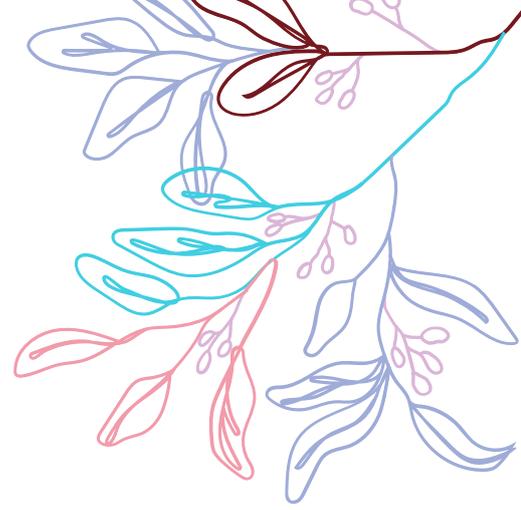
"Is this what I truly want?" he hesitated. "Will this really help?" He pondered only briefly, as his hesitation was immediately replaced by horror. He had already dropped the match.

2

BURN

BY DOMINIK LENARČIČ

My heart burns. So does my house.



DRIBBLES BY DOMINIK LENARČIČ

3 HOOK

Line and sinker. God, I'm such a fool.

4 KEYS

I lost them.

5 COURAGE

I don't have it.

6 VICTIMS

How many?! You absolute monster.



DRIBBLES BY DOMINIK LENARČIČ

7 AN UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION

To my younger self: you are an idiot.

8 FACEPLANT

The floor tastes like broken teeth.

9 THIS IS NOT JUST THE TITLE

10 ACCIDENT

I stopped. He didn't.

THE END OF THE UNIVERSE

BY ARIELA HERČEK

Snuffed out by the cold, the sky dances tonight with dying stars. The light is long gone and the universe is dark, only illuminated now and then with merging black holes, the fireworks of space and time. They bend, lapping at the boundaries of existence like waves, expanding the known; expanding the unknown with it. But there is a law that cannot be broken: no energy is created and none is destroyed.

“Even in the freezing dark, my atoms will go on to form new life,” you sputtered, mouth full of blood.

“’Til the end and further,” I cried.



DRIBBLES BY ARIELA HERČEK

THE SKELETON KEY

They found a temple yesterday, filled to the brim with treasure. But there was a complicated lock that couldn't be opened with any key. That is, until the archaeologists found a mass cemetery buried under tons of sand close-by and realized that the skeletons were the key.

The day I was born was a
tragedy for me.

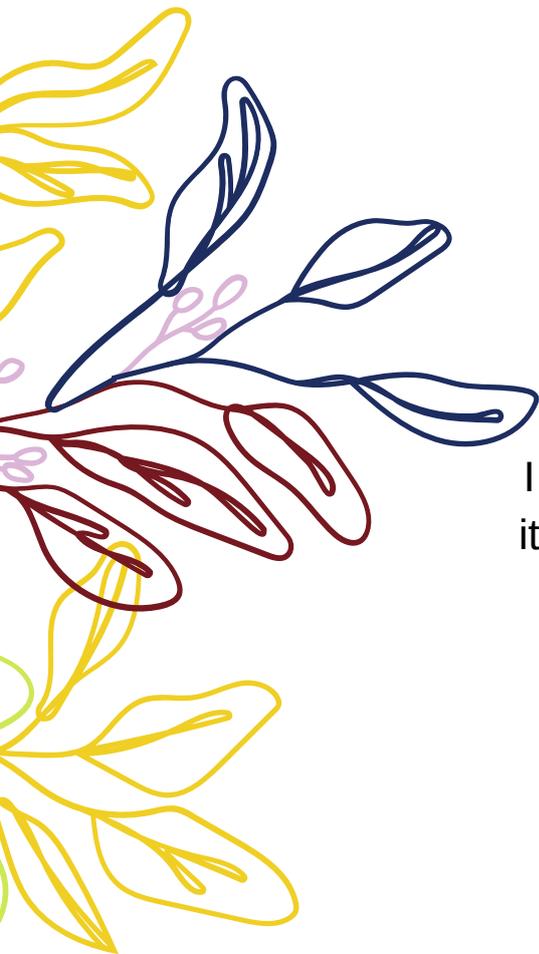
I ripped off the wings of
angels, trying to be holy
enough for this world.

I sold my soul to the devil and
it was worth it to see the world
burn beneath my feet.

There is no God but death.

Nothing ever ends with a
whimper.

To My Younger Self: never
shut up when men tell you to.



A THANK-YOU NOTE TO JACK HARTE

BY KARIN PETKO

Apart from writing our own drabbles, we also had the opportunity to listen to some words of wisdom and tips from Jack Harte, Irish writer and the founder of Irish Writers' Union. Short stories are his cup of tea, together with plays and other genres, and so it is no surprise that he was the one we wanted to hear speak about short stories. He stressed the similarities between short prose and poetry, then provided a very illustrative comparison: while novels are like a line, starting at a certain point and going on in its direction for some time, short stories are more like dots: tiny and can go into any direction. Well, short but sweet. Just like this little chapbook you have just read. But, after all, it is not so tiny, is it? Given the fact that it was all done within 90 minutes. I think we did a great job!

