


# Introduction

 WHEN READERS AND WRITERS ask me what prompted the creation of Short Story America, I tend to respond with a question: Who doesn't love a good short story?

Most of us have read and enjoyed short stories which have mattered to us in some lasting way. We remember famous stories like Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado," Richard Connell's "The Most Dangerous Game," O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" or Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find." We might recall equally great stories like F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams," Jack Finney's "Contents of the Dead Man's Pockets," Conrad Aiken's "Impulse," Daphne du Maurier's "The Birds," Ernest Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," or Raymond Carver's "Cathedral." Yet, despite the fact that most willing readers deeply enjoy and remember short stories when they find the good ones, it is *finding* the good ones that has become so difficult in today's hectic and dispersed culture.

The short story is the great original American literary art form. Unfortunately, the natural electronic progression of radio, television, computers, video games, cell phones, texting, countless "apps" and brutally-busy personal and professional schedules have combined over the decades to drive the short story away from the mainstream and to the outer margins, indeed the nether regions of modern life. I founded Short Story America to bring the writers and readers of short stories together, to make it easier for readers to find today's best and emerging authors of short fiction, without the hulking obstacle of traditional publishers which have minimized the short story's availability to readers who seek quality reading experiences.

Great short stories are being written today, and this anthology

brings fifty-six of them to you in one great book. This is Volume I of the Short Story America series. We're just getting started. My hope is that ten years from now, your bookshelf and mine will house the first ten volumes of the Short Story America series, as we proudly share in the much-deserved renaissance of this great art form.

The author Ortega y Gasset wrote that great writers "construct human souls." The human souls created by the authors of the stories in this collection are deeply memorable, and their situations and conflicts evoke thought, emotion, humor, love, compassion, sometimes disdain, and above all else, self-examination and an awareness of others in society. The best short stories entertain, as is their first job, but also "unfreeze" the thinking reader's mind. Jerzy Kosinski (*Being There*) called this "unfreezing" of the mind and soul "coming to terms with the *essence* of one's existence." It is easy today for any of us to fall victim to what the editor Will Blythe called "the beeping, noisesome electronic grid that attempts to snare us in a web of reflex, of twitch and spasm." Short Story America, here in book form, online at [www.shortstoryamerica.com](http://www.shortstoryamerica.com), and soon on audio, offers you sanctuary within that old-fashioned relationship with short stories that both entertain and matter to the souls inside of us.

- T.D. Johnston