



The Best American Short Stories 2013

By Elizabeth Strout

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“As our vision becomes more global, our storytelling is stretching in many ways. Stories increasingly change point of view, switch location, and sometimes pack as much material as a short novel might,” writes guest editor Elizabeth Strout. “It’s the variety of voices that most indicates the increasing confluence of cultures involved in making us who we are.” *The Best American Short Stories 2013* presents an impressive diversity of writers who dexterously lead us into their corners of the world.

In “Miss Lora,” Junot Díaz masterfully puts us in the mind of a teenage boy who throws aside his better sense and pursues an intimate affair with a high school teacher. Sheila Kohler tackles innocence and abuse as a child wanders away from her mother, in thrall to a stranger she believes is the “Magic Man.” Kirstin Valdez Quade’s “Nemecia” depicts the after-effects of a secret, violent family trauma. Joan Wickersham’s “The Tunnel” is a tragic love story about a mother’s declining health and her daughter’s helplessness as she struggles to balance her responsibility to her mother and her own desires. New author Callan Wink’s “Breatharians” unsettles the reader as a farm boy shoulders a grim chore in the wake of his parents’ estrangement.

“Elizabeth Strout was a wonderful reader, an author who knows well that the sound of one’s writing is just as important as and indivisible from the content,” writes series editor Heidi Pitlor. “Here are twenty compellingly told, powerfully felt stories about urgent matters with profound consequences.”

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Editorial Review

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In her introduction, editor Pitlor notes that, in the past, a period of distillation needed to pass before one could write about trauma. In today's digital age, however, with the speed that our society shares news such as the Sandy Hook shooting last December, "while we are grieving, we are now writing." Although none of the stories in this collection respond directly to current events, each story inhabits its own unique tragedy. These tragedies are those of everyday life, sometimes subtle and often humorous, and range from the acute loneliness of nineteenth-century New England farm life, to the doomed love between a teenage boy and a middle-aged woman, to divorce, to a strange neighbor arriving at a front door—naked—in the night. The setting of modern-day, nondescript America appears in these 20 stories to the point of feeling repetitive, but as a whole this collection is wildly divergent and entertaining, and each story is cultivated with a keen eye for voice and character. --Emily Roth

From the Inside Flap

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From the Back Cover

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The Best American series is the premier annual showcase for the country's finest short fiction and nonfiction. Each volume's series editor selects notable works from hundreds of magazines, journals, and websites. A special guest editor, a leading writer in the field, then chooses the best twenty or so pieces to publish. This unique system has made the Best American series the most respected and most popular of its kind.

The Best American Short Stories 2013 includes

Daniel Alarcon, Junot Diaz, Gish Jen, David Means, Lorrie Moore, Antonia Nelson,

Kristin Valdez Quade, George Saunders, Jim Shepard, and others

Elizabeth Strout is the author of the New York Times bestseller *The Burgess Boys*; *Olive Kitteridge*, for which she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize; the national bestseller *Abide with Me*; and *Amy and Isabelle*, winner of the Los Angeles Times Art Seidenbaum Award and the Chicago Tribune Heartland Prize. She has also been a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Orange Prize in London.

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Jenna Quintana:

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