

Information, Answers & Reviews

Everything I Never Told You



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The story opens with the death of 16-year-old Lydia. Her family has gathered for breakfast on a busy May morning. It's the usual chaos, two kids running in and out of the kitchen gathering homework and school bags and eating on the run.

It's the 1970s and the father, James, is a history professor in a small town in Ohio; the mother, Marilyn, an unwilling homemaker.

Celeste Ng's luminous first novel deals with issues of race, sex discrimination, and a parent who places burdensome academic expectations on a child. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on January 27, 2015

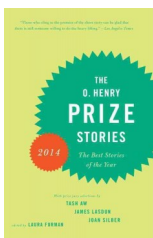
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Best Short Stories of the Year



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I love anthologies, particularly of short stories. But I must confess I never follow the editor's carefully thought-out arrangement.

Certainly, I hit pay dirt with this year's O. Henry prize collection. The very first story I dove into 'Good faith' by Colleen Morrissey wowed me on first reading and ended up being my favorite. What made it so good? Snake handlers, religion, a summer road-trip, girls coming of age, family conflict, romance, and camping out under the stars. It tells the story of a religious family travelling the south who meet two rich young men on the road.

That night the leading character Rachel does snake handling, not for entertainment, as she tells the more serious young man, Mr. Pattinson, but as part of her faith and religious practice. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on January 22, 2015

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[2014: The Pen/ O. Henry Prize stories](#)

[Short Stories](#)

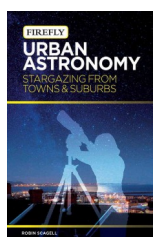
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Stars, Planets, Moon



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I know the title sounds like an oxymoron, but if astronomy excites you, don't let living in the heart of town make you give up exploring the night skies.

I myself have seen countless meteors and conjunctions, a changing panoply of shining planets, and many constellations right from town. There was also the night of the bright red aurora borealis that I first mistook for a major fire when I was biking home from work. To say nothing of lunar eclipses and "super" full moons.

Written by the vice-president of Britain's Society of Popular Astronomy, this handy guide is very applicable in the states. What I like best about it is, Scagell's can-do philosophy, not only can you feel awe when looking at planetary bodies, but he invites the reader to do actual astronomical research and to participate as a citizen-scientist.

And don't think you need to spend massive amounts of money for the highest tech equipment. He recommends a good pair of binoculars for sky-viewing and reports that they even have many advantages over telescopes. He does recommend telescopes too--aperture and field of view should be the deciding factors.

He also advises the city astronomer on things and props he can use to cut or eliminate light pollution, such simple things as simple as a black cape to wear over you and your telescope to cut out glare.

In eight well-researched chapters, Scagell pours his passion for the least earthbound of sciences. Chapter 4 covers the targets of star search. All the usual ones: sun, moon, the near and far planets, the constellations but also other astronomical phenomena such as zodiacal light, noctilucent clouds, artificial satellites, double stars, clusters, nebulae, and deep sky objects. Although not necessarily geared for the beginner, all terms are so well explained that the guide can work for both the 25-year amateur astronomer and the neophyte. A four page table at the end lists many deep sky objects that can be seen even from cities.

So, on these dark, clear nights, grab your black cape, your binoculars or telescope, and delve into this fascinating science that connects us to other mysterious worlds.

Posted by Dory L. on January 13, 2015

[Urban Astronomy: Stargazing from Towns and Suburbs](#)

[Science & Nature](#)

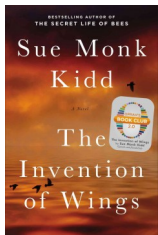
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The Invention of Wings



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Two young women characters guide the reader back to 19th century South Carolina where the institution of slavery affected everyone's life and relationships. Hetty (nicknamed Handful) is a skinny wisp of a girl with amber eyes and wild braids in her hair.

At the age of ten, the Missus gives her to her middle child, Sarah, who has just moved up from the nursery. In this society it's normal to have your own slave, and one who can mend and sew is highly valued.

At an elegant birthday party attended by the privileged young of Charleston society, Sarah refuses this lady's maid/slave. Sarah does not believe in the institution although her family's life centers around its abuse and brutality. The Missus walks everywhere with a cane, but the slaves know its real use—to hit them on the head should they bring this lady displeasure. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on January 7, 2015

[The Invention of Wings: a novel](#)

[Historical](#)

[Fiction](#)

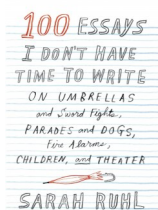
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100 Essays I Don't Have Time to Write



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This collection of mostly mini-essays is a great find for anyone interested in either writing or theatre. Ruhl, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for her play *In the Next Room, ?* displays her skills at

language, views of playwriting, and her both playful and utterly serious response to the stage. Several titles display her marvelous sense of humor: ?Bad Plays and Original Sin,? ?On Nakedness and Sight Lines,? and ?Watching My Mother Die on Stage.? (Her mother is an actress.) Others are more philosophical: ?God as Audience: A Non-syllogism,? ?Is There an Ethics of Comedy, and Is It Bad When Comedies Make People Laugh?? ?On Knowing,? and ?On Lice.? Whoops, the last one isn't philosophical, but very practical.

The smallest essay is three words not including the title. I quote in full from ?An Essay in Praise of Smallness?: ?I admire minimalism.? [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on December 31, 2014

[parades and dogs](#)

[fire alarms](#)

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[100 Essays I Don't Have Time to Write: on umbrellas and sword fights](#)

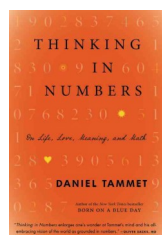
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Thinking in Numbers: on Life, Love, Meaning and Math



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It's a cliché, but people often say that if you excel at math, you'll have little talent for language and *vice versa*. Transplanted Londoner and Parisian resident, Daniel Tammet proves the falsehood of this statement.

In 25 essays that examine life from a mathematical perspective, Tammet enthralls and enlightens the reader on many things especially the beauty of mathematics. Einstein's son Hans Albert said that his father's character was more like an artist than that of a scientist because his highest praise for a theory "was not that it was correct nor that it was exact but that it was beautiful."

Tammet begins this collection with an essay describing his family and numbers theory. In fact, he attributes his first interest in math due to the fact that his neighbors' great interest in his family occurred because there were nine children. And as he explains it, there were 512 possible ways to spot him or his siblings around town in various combinations. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on December 29, 2014

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