



Look at the Birdie: Unpublished Short Fiction

By Kurt Vonnegut

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Look at the Birdie: Unpublished Short Fiction By Kurt Vonnegut

Look at the Birdie is a collection of fourteen previously unpublished short stories from one of the most original writers in all of American fiction. In this series of perfectly rendered vignettes, written just as he was starting to find his comic voice, Kurt Vonnegut paints a warm, wise, and funny portrait of life in post—World War II America—a world where squabbling couples, high school geniuses, misfit office workers, and small-town lotharios struggle to adapt to changing technology, moral ambiguity, and unprecedented affluence.

Here are tales both cautionary and hopeful, each brimming with Vonnegut's trademark humor and profound humanism. A family learns the downside of confiding their deepest secrets into a magical invention. A man finds himself in a Kafkaesque world of trouble after he runs afoul of the shady underworld boss who calls the shots in an upstate New York town. A quack psychiatrist turned "murder counselor" concocts a novel new outlet for his paranoid patients. While these stories reflect the anxieties of the postwar era that Vonnegut was so adept at capturing— and provide insight into the development of his early style—collectively, they have a timeless quality that makes them just as relevant today as when they were written. It's impossible to imagine any of these pieces flowing from the pen of another writer; each in its own way is unmistakably, quintessentially Vonnegut.

Featuring a Foreword by author and longtime Vonnegut confidant Sidney Offit and illustrated with Vonnegut's characteristically insouciant line drawings, **Look at the Birdie** is an unexpected gift for readers who thought his unique voice had been stilled forever—and serves as a terrific introduction to his short fiction for anyone who has yet to experience his genius.

Read "Hello, Red" and "The Petrified Ants," two of the stories from the collection, as single-story e-books before **Look at the Birdie** goes on sale. Available wherever e-books are sold.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This collection of unpublished fiction sheds light on Vonnegut's early writing, but fails to measure up to the rest of his formidable oeuvre. The stories are brief, vividly imagined and sometimes carry a science-fictional twist with a moral (of sorts), not unlike Harrison Bergeron. In *Confido*, for instance, an inventor manufactures a device that whispers to its users everything they want to hear, with special emphasis on their worst desires and suspicions, while the title story describes an interaction at a bar between a disgruntled man and a self-styled murder counselor who has come up with an ingenious method for killing people. Sidney Offit, Vonnegut's longtime friend, notes in an introduction that it's possible these stories went unpublished because they didn't satisfy the author. To be sure, they lack the polish and humor of the author's best-known work. Nevertheless, for devotees, they provide an instructive view of Vonnegut's talent in the making. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Review

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About the Author

Kurt Vonnegut was a master of contemporary American literature. His black humor, satiric voice, and incomparable imagination first captured America's attention in **The Sirens of Titan** in 1959 and established him, in the words of *The New York Times*, as "a true artist" with the publication of **Cat's Cradle** in 1963. He was, as Graham Greene declared, "one of the best living American writers." Mr. Vonnegut passed away in April 2007.

Sidney Offit has written two novels, two memoirs, and ten books for young readers. He was a senior editor of *Intellectual Digest* and a book editor of *Politics Today*, and for three decades he has served on the boards of the Authors Guild and PEN American Center. Currently, Mr. Offit is the curator emeritus of the George

Polk Awards in Journalism. He lives in New York City with his wife, Avodah.

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