



Everyone Wants to Be Ambassador to France

SHORT STORIES BY
Bryan Hurt

“Bryan Hurt’s stories are like no one else’s. They are by turns hilarious, whimsical, arresting, and heartbreaking, but what makes them such a delight is the sly simplicity and off-handed charm of their telling.” —**T.C. Boyle**, author of *Maybe The Terranauts*

A seagull, a goat, and a teenage boy enter into a bizarre love triangle that leaves one of them dead and the other two changed forever. A grief-stricken astronaut quits NASA to paint pictures of the moon. A lonely scientist creates stars in his basement and becomes enraged when he discovers that one of his stars harbors life. An eighteenth-century British aristocrat adopts two teenage girls and absconds with them to France, determined to raise one of them to become his perfect wife. By turns humorous and heartbreaking, this debut collection offers weird and wonderful stories that illuminate the hidden truths of life.

ADVANCE PRAISE

“I have been a longtime fan of Bryan Hurt’s stories and what a joy to have them all together now in this book! They are a soup pot of the funniest dry sentences plus unusual facts that he unearthed from who knows where, and an unstated humanity tucked inside those facts, and a constant eye on the oddness of culture and the lilt of a well-placed phrase and a carrot. In our endlessly data-packed world, Hurt’s keen sparseness is a welcome addition to the bookshelves.”

—**Aimee Bender**, author of *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*

“*Everyone Wants to Be Ambassador to France* is swift and spare, a collection to devour and admire. Spectacular!”

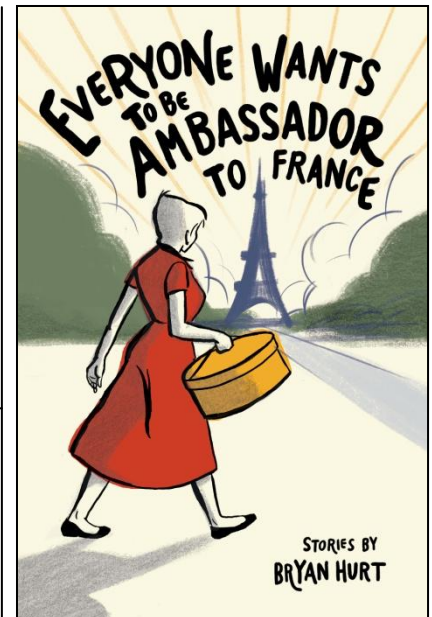
—**Aspen Matis**, author of the internationally best-selling memoir *Girl in the Woods*

“The fictional love child of Miranda July, George Saunders, and A. M. Homes, Hurt’s debut collection combines farfetchedness and dark humor with just enough tenderness to make everything feel true.”

—**Courtney Maum**, author of *Touch*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bryan Hurt is the Editor of *Watchlist: 32 Stories by Persons of Interest*. His stories and essays have appeared in *The American Reader*, *Guernica*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *TriQuarterly*, and many other publications. He is an assistant professor of English at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, where he lives with his family.



PUB DATE: June 26, 2018

ISBN: 978-1-59709-700-0

SIZE: 5.5 in x 8.5 in

FORMAT: Tradepaper

EXTENT: 160pp

PRICE: \$15.95

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REDHEN PRESS

DISTRIBUTED BY

Ingram Publisher Services

an exclusive distribution entity

ORDERING INFORMATION

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FROM EVERYONE WANTS TO BE AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE:

From “Spooky Action at a Distance”

We were surprised, or course, that when we built our time machine it turned out to be a DeLorean. We took it apart, put it back together, didn't matter. Looked at the blueprints, looked at the silver car. Scratched our heads. A joke? A prank? Sabotage? If sabotage, then it had backfired. The DeLorean worked.

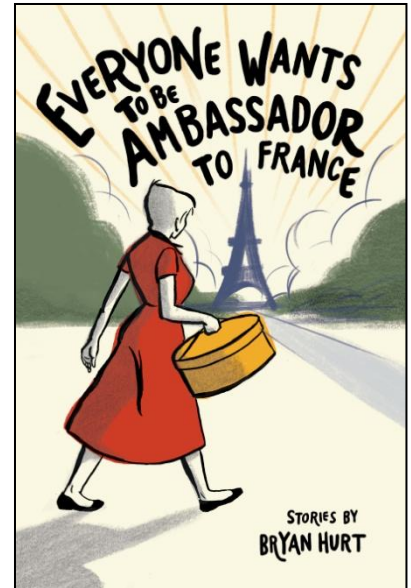
We drove it out of the laboratory, into the parking lot, set the chronometer, and stepped on the gas. When we arrived we were exactly when we wanted to be. Thirty minutes earlier, our own past.

We parked the DeLorean behind a dumpster, hid in the bushes, and spied on ourselves. There we were, earlier Dr. Hu and earlier me, lab-locked and bending over our blueprints, scratching our heads. After that we did pretty much what you'd expect anyone to do with a time machine. We killed Hitler. Smothered him in his crib.

We smothered lots of history's evil people. Bin Laden, Mao, Cheney, Robespierre, Attila the Hun. Even though we had the moral imperative, it wasn't easy killing babies, so we saved people too to balance it out. We saved JFK, RFK, MLK. Saved Franz Ferdinand, Marie Antoinette. You'd be surprised how many people can be saved just by pulling up in a DeLorean and shouting duck.

Also surprising was that there seemed to be no negative consequences. No double occupancy problems, no grandfather paradoxes, no quantum entanglements. Fixing history was easy, like smoothing out the wrinkles in your bed.

This is how I explained it to my wife, the underwear model. I ran my fingers across our sheets. I told her that every time Dr. Hu and I returned to our time everything we pretty much as we'd left it except for a little bit better. History wasn't something heavy that everyone had to carry around with them, a backpack full of broken parts.



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