



The Blue Box

Flash Fiction by Ron Carlson
ISBN 978-1-59709-275-3
Binding: Tradepaper
Size: 6 x 9; Pages: 96
Price: US \$14.95
Pub Date: August 19, 2014



Ron Carlson

REDHEN PRESS

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“Carlson restores to minimalism both its good name and its maximum punch.” —*The Chicago Tribune*

Ron Carlson is a master of the contemporary short story. In *The Blue Box*, he extends that mastery to the *short short* story, offering us a captivating glimpse of a writer at play. With that voice of his—sharp, sensitive, and wry, brimming with good humor—Carlson inhabits one standby after another of the American pop landscape, past and present: monster flicks, action heroes, unsupervised teenagers, blogging. Coming in for special scrutiny is the world of education, in hilarious send-ups of recommendation letters, teacher evaluations, style guides, and a MOOC. Whimsical, wistful, and gently surreal, *The Blue Box* delights in life’s unending absurdities, and reminds us not to take anything—especially ourselves—too seriously.

Praise for Ron Carlson

“Carlson never drops an extra word or a false phrase.”

—*The Washington Post*

“Carlson’s focus is transporting, absorbing. It shakes you from stupor, strips you down. He understands that most of us live in a world of enervating crap, whether in the cliffs of Idaho or the canyons of the city.”

—*Esquire*

“Carlson transforms the comic junkpile of America’s waning prosperity into a livable, if harsh, landscape.”

—*The Chicago Tribune*

“His poems are conversational, extremely accessible, willfully casual and consistently funny, but also laced with a lightly worn sadness, a symptom of everyday heartache.”

—Ron Padgett

Biographical Note

Ron Carlson is the author of five story collections and six novels, including *Return to Oakpine* and *The Signal*. His book of poems, *Room Service: Poems, Meditations, Outcries, & Remarks*, was published by Red Hen Press in 2012. His book on writing, *Ron Carlson Writes a Story*, is taught widely. He is the director of the writing program at the University of California at Irvine and lives in Huntington Beach, California.



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More Praise for Ron Carlson

“Carlson’s a romantic—even when he’s writing about failings, folly and violence.”
—*The Los Angeles Times*

“Carlson captures the ordinary occurrences that define our lives.”
—*Publishers Weekly*

“Carlson writes about the natural world with convincing authority... with Ron Carlson, you really are in expert hands.”
—*The New York Times Book Review*

From *The Blue Box*

“Advice on Finding Another Love Like Me”

I want to tell you right now that you’re going to have to look everywhere, and it is going to be tiring and frustrating, like if your knees hurt and you still haven’t looked down that one street, you’re going to have to go all the way down there and look around and under things and I’ll tell you right now, there’s no love like me down there. Even if you get an airplane and start looking over miles at a time looking down on everything and everybody: no way. Look in the fancy places like where there’s music playing while people shop and you’ll find nothing. Look in the library, but be quiet. Go into the stacks of books and just look and look. Go skiing and look and the people passing in the chairlifts two by two, no chance. Look on the internet like everyone else does and you’ll find a jillion motes of nothing and searching like that will wring your heart dry. I’m just saying. Ask your friends and look at their friends. Oh they are totally going to show you their friends, and what you’ll see is their friends. Nice people, but what. Is there a love like me among them? Several of those guys dress nice and have modern hair, but seriously. Search for a phone booth and look in the phone booth. If you can’t find a phone booth, look in a tire store waiting room where the coffee machine and magazines sit in the little corner. Look in the train station out of nostalgia and look in the train. Look in Sears and the pet store and why don’t they sweep the pet store? Look at the carnival and the people in line. Look in the subway and in the army and the great open fields of unripened cantaloupes. Use those big binoculars like in *Mission Impossible* or that other film. Use a telescope. You are definitely going to need glasses and then another pair of super glasses very soon. Your poor eyes from looking! Oh go ahead and look in the post office and in the great copper mine and alongside of the two lane highway. Keep searching. Look in your dreams and on *America’s Most Wanted*. Look in the hot springs through the steam. Drink lots of water on your search and be careful driving, and from time to time remember the boy who loves you, who stands exactly where you haven’t looked with a butter knife in his hand above the open jar waiting to see if you want marmalade and cheese on your toast. It’s going to pop up in a minute, and he knows you like it warm.