

Sex World

Flash Fiction by Ron Koertge

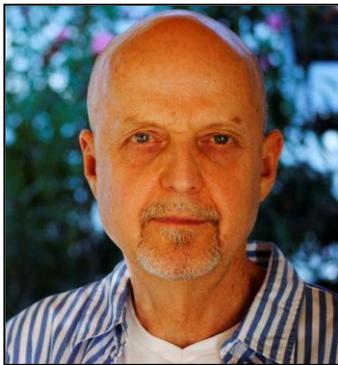
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Ron Koertge



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Sex World

FLASH FICTION

Ron Koertge

“I’ve enjoyed a lot of books this year, but this is the first that I would blanket recommend to almost anyone. . . . Get in; get excited; get out: the perfect book. Read *Sex World*.”

—Brian McGackin, *LitReactor*

Ron Koertge eagerly tries his talented hand at Flash Fiction. In “BFF,” a teenage girl from the near-future orders friends from Amazon. A few pages later, a robot who travels what is left of the world and observes through “well-engineered eyes” claims that the sound of turbines is his lullaby. A fed-up daughter finds a foolproof way to do away with her awful mother, while in “Jesus Dog” a mysterious animal helps a broken man recover. A page from Lois Lane’s secret diary reveals a shocking secret. Many mothers and daughters will see themselves in Ron’s version of the Persephone & Demeter story. Readers are ushered aboard a mysterious train and later invited to listen in as a teacher chats with a peculiar student named Oliver Oliver. A distant relative of Leda takes her boyfriend to the arboretum with grisly results, and Mr. Weenie tells his daughter how he and her mother met. “*Sex World*,” the title story, turns out to not be about sex at all, but heartbreak. In these and dozens more, Ron lives up to his reputation as someone who is funny the way the truly serious often are.

Praise for *Sex World*

“*Sex World*’s brief, potent stories reveal a master satirist trafficking in dark desires, buried fears, black comedy, and the swirl of holy and unholy we all contain. Koertge chronicles secret hungers and vulnerabilities, acerbic tenderness, and the soul’s wrestling match with what it wants versus what it needs and deserves.”

—Amy Gerstler, author of *Dearest Creature*

“In this remarkable collection of flash fiction, Ron Koertge proves that he’s a master of the form. He teases out lyricism from the most mundane of words, and significance from the most mundane of situations.”

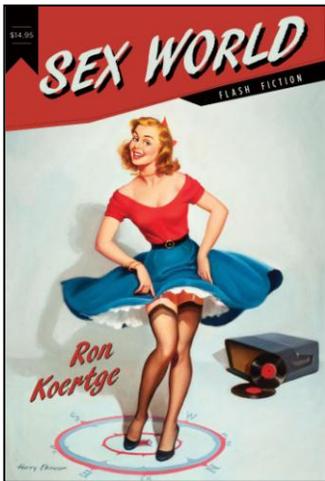
—Gene Luen Yang, author of *American Born Chinese*

“*Sex World* will simultaneously shock, tickle the funny bone, provoke grief and inspire hope with some clever asides and knowing winks to the reader. ‘Sex’ may appear in the title, but the heart of the collection lies in uneasy alliances and human vices and vulnerabilities rendered poetic by a few choice words.”

—Nancy Powell

Biographical Note

Ron Koertge is the author of a dozen poetry collections and numerous novels for teenagers. He lives in South Pasadena, California.



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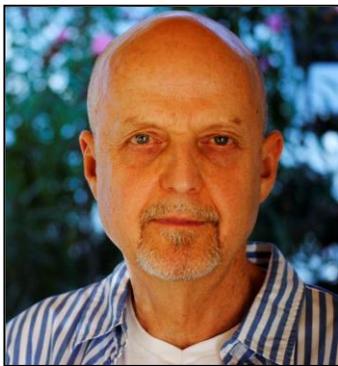
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More Praise for *Sex World*

“Ron Koertge walked into a bar. ‘Read my stories,’ he said. ‘They’re good.’ ‘I don’t have time,’ I said. I was wrong. He was right.”

—Pete Hautman, winner of the National Book Award
and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize

“In the wildly imaginative flash fictions of *Sex World*, poet and young adult author extraordinaire, Ron Koertge, moves from humor to poignance, irreverence to tenderness, with a grace and deceptive ease that I hereby dub Koertgesque (Koertgesian?), and wish I had invented myself. If you want bang for your literary buck, let it stop here.”

—Charles Harper Webb

“*Sex World* is like a box of flashy gourmet chocolates: You can devour them in order or pluck them randomly, each one a deliciously formed morsel that will satisfy your taste for everything from Greek goddesses to robots and the great variety of humanity in between. You’ll pay a price of course: after the bountiful bonbons are gone, you won’t be satisfied; you’ll want more and more and more...”

—Fengar Gael

From *Sex World*

“Willful Crayons”

Robyn’s mother has been difficult lately, so distracted and grouchy. Robyn imagines being grown up and away from home, but she’s so young that just means picturing a taller version of herself eating in a restaurant and ordering anything she wants.

Her mother spends a lot of time on the phone. Whispering. She goes out for an hour, leaving Robyn alone. Like Robyn cares. There’s lots to do in her room, anyway. Today she’s coloring. New crayons from her father who travels a lot. The box is funny-looking, not quite symmetrical. The colors listed on the front are all in another language.

She opens the box, finds a coloring book and goes to work. Page 1 features a lake and a canoe with two people. Blue waves for the water, brown for the canoe, which suddenly tips over, throwing the couple into the water. In an asymmetrical speech balloon, one croaks, “I can’t swim!”

On page 2, a farmer and his wife lean on a fence. He points to a vast field of corn. Robyn’s hand is tugged toward a black crayon. She dots the sky, pecks at it ratatatat. “Locusts,” shouts the farmer. “We’re ruined.”

Robyn’s mother glances into her room. “You’re beet red. Are you sick again?” Then she looks at the coloring book. “What in God’s name are you up to?”

“The crayons,” blurts Robyn. “They made me do it.”

“Don’t be absurd.” Robyn’s mother squats beside her daughter and opens the book. Two people sit in a convertible. “Now pay attention for a change.” Robyn’s mother wields a red crayon for the car. Carefully. Never outside the lines. “See?”

Then she falls back screaming as the driver says, “I’ve got the gun, baby. What time does he get home from work?”