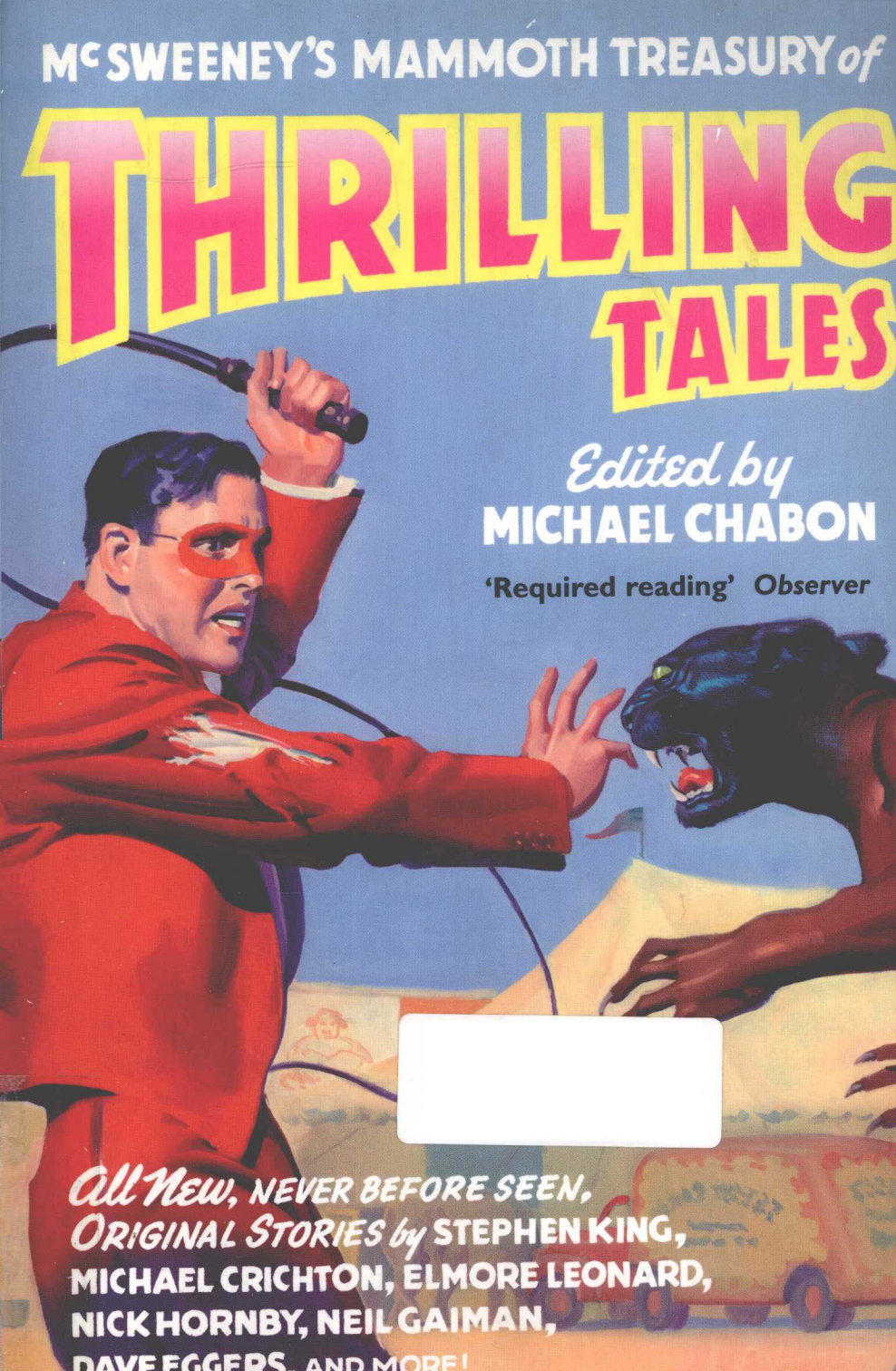


McSWEENEY'S MAMMOTH TREASURY of

THRILLING TALES

Edited by
MICHAEL CHABON

'Required reading' *Observer*

A stylized illustration of a man in a red suit and mask, holding a whip, fighting a werewolf. The background shows a tent and a car.

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NICK HORNBY, NEIL GAIMAN,
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**McSWEENEY'S
MAMMOTH
TREASURY OF
THRILLING
TALES**



EDITED BY MICHAEL CHABON

(THIS IS ISSUE 10 OF McSWEENEY'S QUARTERLY)

HAMISH HAMILTON

an imprint of

PENGUIN BOOKS

© 2002 MCSWEENEY'S PUBLISHING. So this issue marks our first and assuredly temporary vacation from our Garamond 3-only format. It has been designed to resemble a pulp magazine from the 1940s, and includes many actual ads from that time, and in many places the typography is as awkward and overenthusiastic as were many of those magazines. Forgive our indulgences, if you can. EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THIS ISSUE AND WITH MCSWYS GENERALLY was provided by the following volunteers: IN SAN FRANCISCO: Deborah Lauter, Heidi Meredith, Sean Christopher, Alison Willmore, Andro Hsu, Ben Hedstrom, Ben Bush, Cindy Kumano, Walt Opie, Brian Neff, Jenni Ulrich, Miriam Posner, Ben Westhoff, Owen Otto, Kara Platoni, Jay Barmann, Alan Thuma, Matt Dorville, Pamela Jean Smith. IN NEW YORK: Ted Thompson, Krista Overby, Jason Kellermeyer, Michael Hearst, Joshua Camp, Anthony Mascorro, Becky Hayes, Chad Albers, Max Fenton, Joe Pacheco. COPY EDITOR: Emelie Gunnison. CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Lawrence Weschler, John Warner. EDITOR AT LARGE: Sean Wilsey. FRIENDS FROM WAY BACK AND ALWAYS: Diane Vadino, Todd Pruzan, Mieka Strawhorn. LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOR ISSUE 10: Harris Miller. MCSWYS WEBMASTER: Michael Genrich. WEB EDITOR: Lee Epstein. BUSINESSMAN: Dave Kneebone. BROOKLYN STORE LEADER AND EVENTS COORDINATOR: Scott Seeley. SAN FRANCISCO STORE LEADER AND EVENTS COORDINATOR: Yosh Han. VICE PRESIDENT OF MCSWYS OPERATIONS EMERITUS: Julie Wright. DIRECTOR OF 826 VALENCIA: Nínive Calegari. MCSWYS MANAGING EDITOR: Eli Horowitz. PRESIDENT OF MCSWYS PUBLISHING EMERITUS: Sarah Min. PRESIDENT OF MCSWYS PUBLISHING: Barb Bersche. MCSWYS EDITOR: Dave Eggers. GUEST EDITOR FOR ISSUE 10: Michael Chabon.



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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

初稿

For the last year or so I have been boring my friends, and not a few strangers, with a semi-coherent, ill-reasoned, and doubtless mistaken rant on the subject of the American short story as it is currently written.

The rant goes something like this (actually this is the first time I have so formulated it): Imagine that, sometime about 1950, it had been decided, collectively, informally, a little at a time, but with finality, to proscribe every kind of novel from the canon of the future but the nurse romance. Not merely from the critical canon, but from the store racks and library shelves as well. Nobody could be paid, published, lionized, or cherished among the gods of literature for writing any kind of fiction other than nurse romances. Now, because of my faith and pride in the diverse and rigorous brilliance of American writers of the last half-century, I do believe that from this bizarre decision, in this theoretical America, a dozen or more authentic masterpieces would have emerged. Thomas Pynchon's *Blitz Nurse*, for example, and Cynthia Ozick's *Ruth Pattermesser, R.N.* One imagines, however, that this particular genre—that any genre, even one far less circumscribed in its elements and possibilities than

the nurse romance—would have paled somewhat by the year 2002. Over the last year in that oddly diminished world, somebody, somewhere, would be laying down Michael Chabon's *Dr. Kavalier and Nurse Clay* with a weary sigh and crying out, "Surely, oh, surely there must be more to the novel than this!"

Instead of "the novel" and "the nurse romance," try this little *Gedankenexperiment* with "jazz" and "the bossanova," or with "cinema" and "fish-out-of-

water comedies." Now, go ahead and try it with "short fiction" and "the contemporary, quotidian, plotless, moment-of-truth revelatory story."

Suddenly you find yourself sitting right back in your very own universe.

Okay, I confess. I am that bored reader, in that circumscribed world, laying aside his book with a sigh; only the book is my own, and it is filled with my own short stories, plotless and sparkling with epiphanic

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It's not necessary to possess a special gift or charm to teach your dog those parlor tricks that so delight the visiting company. Step by step, John Marsh, one of America's leading dog trainers, tells exactly how to teach your dog to jump, shut the door, shake hands, sit up, retrieve, and say his prayers . . . tricks that are the easiest for your dog to learn and the easiest for you to teach. If you would like to have your dog do tricks—and show your friends what a smart little Fido you own—then don't miss this authoritative, illustrated article.

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August Issue

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dew. It was in large part a result of a crisis—a word much beloved of tedious ranteurs—in my own attitude toward my work in the short story form that sent me back into the stream of alternate time, back to the world as it was before we all made that fateful and perverse decision.

As late as about 1950, if I referred to “short fiction,” I might have been talking about any one of the following kinds of stories: the ghost story; the horror story; the detective story; the story of suspense, terror, fantasy, or the macabre; the sea, adventure, spy, war or historical story; the romance story. Stories, in other words, with plots. A glance at any dusty paperback anthology of classic tales proves the truth of this assertion, but more startling are the names of the authors of these ripping yarns: Poe, Balzac, Wharton, James, Conrad, Graves, Maugham, Faulkner, Twain, Cheever, Coppard. Heavyweights all, some considered among the giants of modernism, source of the moment-of-truth story that, like homo sapiens, appeared relatively late on the scene but has worked very quickly to wipe out all its rivals. Short fiction, in all its rich variety, was published

not only by the pulps, which gave us Hammett, Chandler, and Lovecraft among a very few other writers now enshrined more or less safely in the canon, but also in the great slick magazines of the time: *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Liberty*, and even *The New Yorker*, that proud bastion of the moment-of-truth story that has only recently, and not without controversy, made room in its august confines for the likes of the Last Master of the Plotted Short Story, Stephen King. Very often these stories contained enough plot and color to support an entire feature-length Hollywood adaptation. Adapted for film and radio, some of them, like “The Monkey’s Paw,” “Rain,” “The Most Dangerous Game,” and “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” have been imitated and parodied and have had their atoms scattered in the general stream of the national imagination and the public domain.

About six months ago, I was going on in this vein to Mr. Eggers, the publisher of this magazine, saying things like, “Actually, Dave, horror stories are all psychology,” and “All short stories, in other words, are ghost stories, accounts of visita-

tions and reckonings with the traces of the past." Emboldened by the fact that he had not completely succumbed to unconsciousness, I went on to say that it was my greatest dream in life (other than hearing Kansas's "Dust in the Wind" performed by a mariachi orchestra) someday to publish a magazine of my own, one that would revive the lost genres of short fiction, a tradition I saw as one of great writers writing great short stories. I would publish works both by "non-genre" writers who, like me, found themselves chafing under the strictures of the Ban, and by recognized masters of the genre novel who, fifty years ago, would have regularly worked and published in the short story form but who now have no wide or ready market for shorter work. And I would toss in a serialized novel, too, carrying the tradition all the way back to the days of *The Strand* and *Argosy*. I would—

"If I let you guest-edit an issue of *McSweeney's*," said Mr. Eggers, "can we please stop talking about this?"

The *McSweeney's Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales* is the result of this noble gesture. Whether the experiment has

been a success, I leave to the reader to judge. I will say, however, that while they were working on their stories, a number of the writers found within these covers reported to me, via giddy e-mails, that they had forgotten how much fun writing a short story could be. I think that we have forgotten how much fun reading a short story can be, and I hope that if nothing else, this treasury goes some small distance toward reminding us of that lost but fundamental truth.

—Michael Chabon

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THIS BOOK BENEFITS 826 VALENCIA

Open since April of 2002, 826 Valencia helps Bay Area students, 8 to 18, with their writing skills, on a one-on-one basis. The idea when 826 opened was simple, and is still simple: It was our belief that students could benefit greatly from having experienced tutors give their full attention and expertise to their writing work. In an era when classes of thirty-two or more students are not unusual, overburdened teachers cannot possibly get all their students—particularly those with special needs—caught up with their writing skills. So the tutors at 826 Valencia step in to help teachers and students bridge the gap.

Because we have a paid staff of just one—our director Ninive Clements Calegari—we rely heavily on volunteers to make what we do possible. Thankfully, the Bay Area is home to a generous group of writing and editing professionals; at presstime, we had a volunteer corps of 267 tutors. Our numbers enable us to not only host students at our Mission District location, but also to send tutors, in almost whatever numbers are requested, into public schools, to work with teachers on projects of their design, and for whatever duration needed.

There's a lot more to say, and already we're running out of room. Briefly: we also offer free workshops, at least one a day, covering everything from SAT prep to playwriting to digital filmmaking to broadcast journalism; we offer scholarships, three a year, \$10,000 each, to matriculating seniors from public schools; we help young authors design, edit, print, bind and self-publish their own books; and we just started something we're calling—and we do need to make the title a little catchier—the 826 Valencia Teacher of the Month Award, a \$1500 award going every four weeks to an exceptional local teacher, nominated by their fellow educators and students. Lastly, our building is home to a store that sells supplies to working pirates. You really have to visit sometime.

This collection is a benefit project for 826 Valencia. Though *McSweeney's* takes care of most of the costs of running 826, we can always use more help, and this issue, co-published with Hamish Hamilton, is providing us a needed boost. For more information, please visit www.826Valencia.com, or come see us in San Francisco, on Valencia Street, between 19th and 20th Streets. —D.E. & N.C.

McSweeney's MAMMOTH TREASURY of
THRILLING
Edited by
MICHAEL CHABON **TALES**

With Illustrations by Howard Chaykin

Issue 10

Winter 2002-3

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Albertine, solace of a city in ruins. Any memory you wanted, any time you wanted it. All for the low, low price of... history itself.

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They were the sons of an imperial traitor, marked for life. Their only honor lay in their loyalty to each other. Their sole chance for salvation lay in the empire of the clouds.





Tedford and the Megalodon

By JIM SHEPARD

**He went in search of a relic of Earth's past,
and came face to face with the mortal specter of his own!**

He'd brought some books with him on the way out, but had lost the lot of them on the transfer to the smaller boat. One of the lifting pallets had upset and spilled the crate down the side of the ship. His almanac had been saved, for which he was thankful.

Among the losses had been his Simpson and his Eldredge; his *Osteology and Relationships of Chondrichthyans*; his *Boys' Book of Songs*, Balfour's *Development of Elasmobranch Fishes*, and, thrown in from his childhood, his Beadle Boys' Library, including *Wide Awake Ned: The Boy Wizard*.

Above his head, interstellar space was impossibly black. That night he wrote in his almanac, *Velvet set with piercing bits of light*.

There seemed to be, spread above him, some kind of galactic cloud arrangement. Stars arced up over one horizon and down the other. The water nearest the ice seemed disturbingly calm. Little wavelets lapped the prow of the nearest kayak. The cold was like a wind from the stars.

Thirty-three-year-old Roy Henry Tedford and his little pile of provisions were braced on the lee side of a talus slope on a speck of an island at somewhere around degree of longitude 146 and degree of latitude 58, seven hundred miles from Adélie Land on the Antarctic Coast, and four hundred from the nearest landfall on any official map: the unprepossessing dot of Macquarie Island to the east. It was a fine midsummer night in 1923.

His island, one of three ice-covered rocks huddled together in a quarter-mile chain, existed only on the hand-drawn chart that had brought him here, far from those few shipping lanes and fishing waters this far south. The chart was entitled, in Heuvelmans's barbed-wire handwriting, alongside his approximation of the location, *The Islands of the Dead*. Under that Heuvelmans had printed in block letters the aboriginal

word *Kadimakara*, or "Animals of the Dreamtime."

Tedford's provisions included twenty-one pounds of hard-tack, two tins of biscuit flour, a sack of sweets, a bag of dried fruit, a camp-stove, an oilskin wrap for his almanac, two small reading-lanterns, four jerry cans of kerosene, a waterproofed one-man tent, a bedroll, a spare coat and gloves, a spare set of Wellington boots, a knife, a small tool set, waterproofed and double-wrapped packets of matches, a box camera in a specially made mahogany case in an oilskin pouch, a revolver, and a Bland's .577 Axite Express. He'd fired the Bland's twice, and both times been knocked onto his back by the recoil. The sportsman in Melbourne who'd sold it to him had assured him that it was the closest thing to field artillery that a man could put to his shoulder.

He was now four hundred miles from sharing a wish, or a word, or a memory. If all went well, it might be two months before he again saw a friendly face. Until she'd stopped writing, his mother had informed him regularly that it took a powerful perversity of spirit to send an otherwise intelligent

young man voluntarily into such a life.

His plan looked excellent on paper. He'd already left another kayak, with an accompanying supply depot, on the third or westernmost island, in the event bad weather or high seas prevented his return to this one.

He'd started as a student of J.H. Tate's in Adelaide. Tate had assured himself of volunteers for his fieldwork by making a keg of beer part of his collection kit, and had introduced Tedford to evolutionism and paleontology, enlivening the occasional dinner party by belting out, to the tune of "It's a Long Way to Tipperary":

*It's a long way from Amphioxus,
It's a long way to us;
It's a long way from Amphioxus
To the meanest human cuss.
Farewell, fins and gill slits,
Welcome, teeth and hair—
It's a long long way from
Amphioxus,
But we all came from there!*

Tedford had been an eager acolyte for two years and then had watched his enthusiasm stall in the face of the remoteness of the sites, the lack of monetary support, and the meagerness of the finds. Three

months for an old tooth, as old Tate used to put it. Tedford had taken a job as a clerk for the local land surveyor, and his duties had exposed him to a panoply of local tales, whispered stories, and bizarre sightings. He'd found himself investigating each, in his free time, in search of animals known to local populations but not to the world at large. His mode was analysis, logical dissection, and reassembly, when it came to the stories. His tools were perseverance, an appetite for observation, a tolerance for extended discomfort, and his aunt's trust fund. He'd spent a winter month looking for bunyips, which he'd been told inhabited the deep waterholes and roamed the billabongs at night. He'd found only a few fossilized bones of some enormous marsupials. He'd been fascinated by the paringmal, the "birds taller than the mountains," but had uncovered them only in rock paintings. He'd spent a summer baking on a blistering hardpan awaiting the appearance of the legendary cadimurka.

All that knocking about had become focused on the day that a fisherman had shown him a tooth he'd dredged up with a

deep sea net. The thing had revealed itself to be a huge whitish triangle, thick as a scone, the root rough, the blade enamel-polished and edged with twenty or so serrations per centimeter. The heft had been remarkable: that single tooth had weighed nearly a pound.

Tedford had come across teeth like it before, in Miocene limestone beds. They belonged, Tate had assured him, to a creature science had identified as *Carcharodon Megalodon*, or Great Tooth, a recent ancestor of the Great White Shark, but nearly three times as large: a monster shark, with jaws within which a tall man could stand without stooping, and a stout, oversized head. But the tooth that Tedford held in his hand was *white*, which meant it came from an animal either quite recently extinct, or not extinct at all.

He'd written up the find in the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*. The editor had accepted the piece but refused its inflammatory title.

A year later nearly to the day, his eye had been caught by a newspaper account of the Warnambool Sea Monster, christened for the home port of eleven fishermen and a boy, in

three tuna boats, who had refused to go to sea for several days. They'd been at work at certain far-off fishing grounds that only they had discovered, which lay beside a shelf plunging down into very deep water, when an immense shark, of unbelievable proportions, had surfaced among them, taking nets, one of the boats, and a ship's dog back down with it. The boy in the boat that had capsized had called out, "Is that the fin of a great fish?" and then everything had gone topsyturvy. Everyone had been saved from the vortex except the dog. They'd been unanimous that the beast had been something the like of which they'd never seen. In interviews conducted in the presence of both the local Fisheries Inspector and one B. Heuvelmans, dentist and naturalist, the men had been questioned very closely, and had all agreed upon the details, even down to the creature's length, which seemed absurd: at least sixty-five feet. They'd agreed that it was at least the length of the wharf shed back at their bay. The account made clear that these were men used to the sea and to all sorts of weather, and to all sorts of sharks, besides.