

60 SHORT-  
SHORT  
STORIES

# SUDDEN FICTION

INTERNATIONAL

EDITED BY  
ROBERT SHAPARD  
& JAMES THOMAS

INTRODUCTION BY  
CHARLES BAXTER



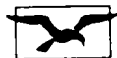
# SUDDEN FICTION INTERNATIONAL

Sixty Short-Short Stories

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Introduction by Charles Baxter



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**SUDDEN FICTION  
INTERNATIONAL**



Also edited by Robert Shapard and James Thomas

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Also edited by James Thomas

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*Wide Side of the Missouri*

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Kara Kurkawa

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## A Note from the Editors

**I**n 1986 we edited an anthology of American short-short stories called *Sudden Fiction*, which has proved so popular that it is still being discovered, not only at local bookstores but in courses at over two hundred colleges and universities. Moreover, it is being translated into German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, and Chinese. Why such interest? The recent flowering of the short-short form has been heralded as the birth of a new sub-genre of fiction, one that is sometimes like the larger short story, but often more tantalizing, protean, and highly charged.

As we collected American stories for that anthology, we noted the new visibility of short-shorts in translation. Borges, Babel, Dinesen, Calvino, Colette, and Kawabata—all were coming home to us now, more often and in better translation. So we decided to think of a volume that would be international, and began to ask writers and editors who had helped with *Sudden Fiction* for their suggestions. Responding with generosity, they sent recommendations, lists of translators and publishers, titles of collections, and often stories themselves. Best of all, they gave us direct introductions to writers in many countries.

Sometimes the route to our international contributors was circuitous. We tracked one translator of Chinese fiction through several American universities before we met him, at last, in a coffee shop in San Francisco. "Short-short stories are very popular in China," he told us. We were elated. But not everything panned out so well. An editor in Seoul wrote us that "Not too



## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

many short-shorts are being written here. We Koreans are long-winded." Later a visiting Central American playwright jotted down the names and addresses of a dozen compatriots on a hotel napkin. He smiled and said, "Once you know one writer in my country, you know them all." We photocopied his jottings, and wrote more letters. By return mail we received more books in Spanish, stories in English typed on crinkly lightweight paper, and the names of still more authors. Meantime, packets poured in from Europe and the British Isles—tides of photocopies; from Asia came paperbacks smelling of clove (or was it glue?); and there was air mail with exotic stamps from Brazil and Morocco and other farflung places.

After two years of collecting, it was time to take stock, to select from the bounty and choose those stories we felt were most compelling and represented the greatest variety. The result is the book you have in your hand. Some of the writers are known to the world, others are well-known in their own countries, and still others are new talents yet to be widely recognized. When our final selection was made, we asked these writers, and sometimes their translators, to talk about the stories. They do so, under brief biographies, in our Afternotes section. Finally, and above all, such a richly various offering needs a single, clear-eyed look at the form, and this you will find in the introduction by Charles Baxter, author of two collections of stories, *Harmony of the World* and *Through the Safety Net*, and a novel, *First Light*.

We hope you enjoy this voyage around the world of sudden fiction.