THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF THE MODERN AGE

Selected and Introduced by
DOUGLAS ANGUS

A century of masterpieces by twenty of the world's greatest writers including:

Anton Chekhov
Joseph Conrad
William Faulkner
Ernest Hemingway
Henry James
James Joyce
Franz Kafka
D. H. Lawrence
Thomas Mann
Guy de Maupassant
Jean-Paul Sartre

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF THE MODERN AGE

Revised Edition

selected and introduced by

DOUGLAS ANGUS

THE RANDOM HOUSE PUBLISHING GROUP • NEW YORK

The editor and publisher wish to thank all those who have contributed to this volume:
GOOSEBERRIES, reprinted from **The Portable Chekhov**, translated by Avraham Yarmolinsky, by permission of The Viking Press, Inc. Copyright 1947 by The Viking Press, Inc.
THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE, reprinted from **The Soft Side** by Henry James, copyright 1900 by Henry James, by permission of Paul R. Reynolds & Sons, 599 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10017.
A CLEAN, WELL-LIGHTED PLACE by Ernest Hemingway is reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons from **Winner Take Nothing**. Copyright 1933 Charles Scribner's Sons; Renewal copyright © 1961 Ernest Hemingway.
YOUTH, reprinted from **Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories** by Joseph Conrad, by permission of J.M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., London. Copyright 1903, by Doubleday & Co., Inc., New York, and J.M.Dent and Sons, Ltd., Messrs. William Blackwood and the Trustees of the Conrad Estate, London.
THE ROCKING-HORSE WINNER, reprinted from **The Lovely Lady**, D.H. Lawrence. Included in **The Portable D.H. Lawrence.** Copyright 1933 by the Estate of D.H. Lawrence, by permission of The Viking Press, Inc.
BLISS, reprinted from **The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield** by Katherine Mansfield, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1920, 1937 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Canada with permission of The Society of Authors as the literary representative of the Estate of the late Miss Katherine Mansfield.
THE DEAD, reprinted from **The Dubliners** by James Joyce, by permission of The Viking Press, Inc. All rights reserved.
LITTLE HERR FRIEDEMANN, reprinted from **Stories of Three Decades** by Thomas Mann by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1936 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
SOPHISTICATION, reprinted from **Winesburg, Ohio** by Sherwood Anderson by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., Copyright 1919 by B. W. Huebsch, 1947 by Eleanor Copenhaver Anderson.
THE STORY OF MY DOVECOT, reprinted from **The Collected Stories of Isaac Babel**, Copyright 1955 by Criterion Books, Inc., by permission of the publishers.
THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER, reprinted from **The Selected Works of Stephen Vincent Benet**, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc; Copyright 1936 by The Curtis Publishing Company; Copyright 1936, by Stephen Vincent Benet by permission of Brandt & Brandt.
A ROSE FOR EMILY, reprinted from **Collected Stories of William Faulkner** by permission of Random House, Inc. Copyright 1930 and renewed 1957 by William Faulkner.
THE METAMORPHOSIS, Part One, reprinted from **The Metamorphosis** by Franz Kafka, published by The Vanguard Press, Inc.
THE WALL, reprinted from **Intimacy** by Jean-Paul Sartre, translated by Lloyd Alexander by permission of New Directions. Copyright 1948 by New Directions.
JUDAS reprinted from **More Stories by Frank O'Conner** by Frank O'Conner by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1948, 1954 by Frank O'Conner. Printed in Canada with permission of Harold Matson Company.
OF THIS TIME, OF THAT PLACE, reprinted by permission of Lionel Trilling; copyright 1943 by Lionel Trilling.
THE LOTTERY, reprinted from **The Lottery** by Shirley Jackson, by permission of Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, Inc. Copyright 1949 by Shirley Jackson.
THE LEDGE, reprinted by permission of Lawrence S. Hall. Copyright 1959 by Lawrence S. Hall.

A Fawcett Book
Published by The Random House Publishing Group

Published in the United States by Fawcett Books, an imprint of The Random House Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.

Fawcett is a registered trademark and the Fawcett colophon is a trademark of Random House, Inc.

www.ballantinebooks.com

ISBN 0-449-30058-7

Manufactured in the United States of America

First Fawcett Edition: February 1962
First Ballantine Books Edition: August 1982
Forty-sixth Printing: April 1993
OPM 69 68 67 66 65 64 63 62 61 60

By far the most remarkable era in the long history of the short story is the modern period. This astonishing flowering of form, which has already lasted over a century and shows no sign of waning, originated in the works of three nineteenth-century masters—Poe, Maupassant, and Chekhov. The literary renaissance which they inaugurated is represented, in all its richness and diversity, by the stories in this book.

From the Introduction
The Best Short Stories of the Modern Age

Edited by Douglas Angus
Published by The Random House Publishing Group:

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF THE MODERN AGE

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN SHORT STORIES
(with Sylvia Angus)

GREAT MODERN EUROPEAN SHORT STORIES
(with Sylvia Angus)

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps it is some kinship between the short-story form and the urgency of the modern age that explains why, with hardly any marketing outlets, with little reward to the author in either fame or money, the short story continues to be a rich and fertile strain of literary expression. At its best, it achieves a degree of perfection rarely attained by the novel. Indeed, the distinctive power and beauty of the short story are involved in its very brevity, the discipline of its strict limits challenging the writer to ever more brilliant inventiveness in such areas as symbolism, suggestiveness and plotting.

By far the most remarkable era in the long history of the short story is the modern period. This astonishing flowering of the form, which has already lasted over a century and shows no sign of waning, originated in the works of three nineteenth-century masters—Poe, Maupassant, and Chekhov. The literary renaissance which they inaugurated is represented, in all its richness and diversity, by the stories in this book.

From Poe came the idea that power and unity could best be achieved within the brief limits of short works of fiction. His best stories, as typified by "The Tell-Tale Heart," are as moving today as when they were written. But Poe's art lay in the direction of fantasy, symbolism and surrealism, and it remained for Maupassant to reveal how the short story could be shaped into a crisp and penetrating interpretation of everyday reality. The careful construction, the selective eye, the ever-dominant intelligence, now savagely ironical, now gently humorous, all contribute to making Maupassant's short stories equal in quality to the finest nineteenth-century novels. However, before the short

story could attain its distinctive modern form, it had to enter one more important phase—impressionism.

Impressionism is the gateway to modernism for all the arts. It is the phase in art that corresponds to the refinement of analysis in science that has so enlarged man's knowledge and altered his way of life during the past one hundred years. It is distinguished by a greatly increased subtlety, complexity and fluidity in the treatment of light in painting, of tone and atmosphere in music, and of character in literature. It entered literature chiefly through the creative genius of a writer of short stories—Anton Chekhov, whose sympathetic little story "Gooseberries" remains today a masterpiece of the impressionistic technique.

The impact of Chekhov's art may be seen in the works of a variety of twentieth-century European writers, ranging from Katherine Mansfield's brilliant satire "Bliss," for example, to the exotic sea stories of Joseph Conrad. The new method was introduced into America after World War I by Hemingway and by Sherwood Anderson, whose story "Sophistication" is one of the finest examples of early impressionism in America. There followed in this country, partly at least due to the stimulus of this new mode of writing, a development of the short story unequalled by any other country. A few names taken at random of writers of impressionistic stories of high quality are Kay Boyle, Katherine Anne Porter, John Cheever, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Peter Taylor, John Updike, Irwin Shaw, Lionel Trilling, Truman Capote, and Flannery O'Connor. It is possible, however, that this mode of writing reached its apex in the best work of William Faulkner, as represented by his unforgettable impressionistic analysis of the decay of the South in "A Rose for Emily."

Impressionism has not been an unmixed blessing. It has led to a proliferation of brief "slice of life" stories of facile, undisciplined, and superficial brilliance, lacking memorability and breadth of view. Even though many of these stories generate considerable dramatic tension, a vital part of the reader is not touched or committed. Consequently, the effort has been made in the present collection to select only stories of enduring value, in which the writer has commented with arresting earnestness and penetration upon contemporary society.

The term *impressionism* does not, of course, cover the wide range of the modern short story. It does not include entirely the

poetic insight of Pirandello, nor the stylistic achievement of Henry James, nor the important contribution of such an original genius as D. H. Lawrence. Lawrence's famous story "The Rocking-Horse Winner" shows how tragedy may result from the hidden workings of the unconscious. That limitless sea of nodal swirls, inner conflicts, of dark and guilt-laden secrets and uncontrollable storms of passion which, for Lawrence, is the human soul represents in art the major shift in modern man's comprehension of his own psyche, and makes Lawrence a writer of great historical significance.

With the story "The Dead" we come in contact with the writer whom many consider to be the greatest literary genius of the twentieth century—James Joyce. If such an estimate is correct, it is because Joyce has assimilated for purposes of his art the widest and deepest awareness of the significant social, religious, psychological and metaphysical insights of his time. Gabriel, the hero of "The Dead," like Leopold Bloom, the hero of *Ulysses*, is the literary prototype of the new mass man, the white-collar worker, an individual without roots, beliefs, loyalties, or idealism. In truth, he is a cubistic figure—the modern relativity man, sliced and segmented by innumerable social pressures, surviving myths, and hidden complexes. In Joyce's great story we see this new type of hero almost overwhelmed by the multitudinous anxieties, frustrations, and endlessly accumulating fragments of knowledge that fill his large, restless intelligence. His compulsion to analyze everything, even love, undermines the old simplicities of passion, and so he cannot awaken desire in his pretty country wife.

Some writers have reacted to the complexity of modern civilization by turning to violence and more primitive rules of conduct. Thomas Mann, on the other hand, endeavors to capture the multi-hued subtlety of a decaying society by the use of symbols and the repetition of motifs after the manner of music. These qualities are brilliantly developed in his moving story, "Little Herr Friedemann."

All in all, the short story of the age of analysis and anxiety does not depict man in a heroic guise or reflect any deep, abiding faith in his destiny. In the works of those European writers of the thirties and forties who came under the influence of existentialism, the most important philosophical influence upon fiction during these years, the devaluation of man plumbed

new depths of despair. Finding the outer aims of life meaningless in an absurd universe, the existentialist turned inward in search of the essence of man. This reversal of the natural outward orientation of the mind only heightened his sense of disillusionment. Thus Sartre finds at the center of man a nothing, a "Not" as he puts it. This is what happens to the hero of Sartre's most important story, "The Wall," a hero with no future since he is going to be executed in the morning. With no future, and therefore with no outer purpose, it is his tragic discovery that he himself has become no more than a thing of flesh and bones, a badly functioning organism.

In the works of Kafka, existentialism and surrealism combine to produce the strangest and most original short stories of the twentieth century. Here a personal symbolism is so poignant that it fairly bursts through the barriers of such a private art to communicate to the reader Kafka's terrible vision of existence. In his amazing story, "The Metamorphosis," we follow a dream which appears to re-create symbolically Kafka's own oppressive inferiority complex, its origin in an unfortunate father-son relationship, and his crushing sense of exclusion and futility. His symbol of modern man—a great black beetle lying on its back with its many legs threshing ineffectually—marks perhaps the highest point of horror attained by expressionistic symbolism in modern fiction.

It would seem impossible to go beyond the "Not" of Sartre and the "Black beetle" of Kafka in man's self-devaluation, and one should look for a counteraction to the intensely somber tone that has prevailed in literature from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the present. In this connection, the undermining of scientific determinism by the uncertainty principle of quantum physics, and the new evolutionary synthesis broadened to cover the entire range of natural and social phenomena now offer the metaphysical basis for a more positive evaluation of man and a more meaningful conception of the universe than prevailed during the age of analysis. Metaphysically, existentialism is outdated. Man is no longer an insignificant accident in an immense and indifferent universe, but the very center and foreshoot of the vast evolutionary process. This is not to say that an easy optimism prevails among contemporary writers in the presence of the momentous crisis now facing all mankind. Yet the broadest view of man's destiny perceives human con-

sciousness involved in a dramatic and heroic race against catastrophe; it is essentially a tragic-heroic view. Evidence of such a shift may already be seen in the increased dignity and symbolic power of the tragic hero in such works as Pierre Boulle's *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, Romain Gary's *Roots of Heaven* and a number of other novels. It is also interesting to note that in 1960, for the first time in its long history, the O. Henry Memorial first prize was given to a story in which the hero is tragic in the uncompromising, stark classical tradition. The story is "The Ledge" by Lawrence Sargent Hall, and it is because of its possible special significance that is has been selected to close this anthology.

There remain a few stories of unusual interest in this collection that are outside of the main contemporary developments. One of these is Isaac Babel's "The Story of My Dovecot." Babel has only recently been discovered, but he is already recognized to be the most significant short-story writer yet to appear in Communist Russia. Somehow this essentially non-Communist artist managed, through an irony too subtle for his Bolshevik masters to detect, to produce a few vital masterpieces before he was finally destroyed by the Soviet system.

Stephen Vincent Benét's American classic "The Devil and Daniel Webster" also belongs in a special class. In this story Benét, through sheer wit and invention, has raised the primitive American tall story to a high level of sophisticated art. Again, in Shirley Jackson's remarkable story "The Lottery," which caused such a sensation when it first appeared in *The New Yorker*, still another important, special type of story is illustrated. This story reveals the influence of modern sociology and historical analysis upon contemporary fiction. It may well be a type of story of increasing significance, a type that invents special kinds of society to delineate important artistic truths.

Finally, Frank O'Connor's story "Judas" was included, not because it is a story of unusual profundity but because of the rarity, and therefore special value, of its warmth and humor in an age of anxiety and disillusionment.

The reader will find this collection unusually comprehensive, although inevitably a few familiar names had to be omitted. Every effort has been made not only to select stories highly entertaining and teachable, but also to select where possible the most historically significant work of each major writer, so that

the main trends of the modern short story would be truly represented. The result is that within the brief limits of this book will be found a remarkably inclusive record of the odyssey of man's soul during the past eventful hundred years.

DOUGLAS ANGUS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION *vii*

The Tell-Tale Heart *1*
Edgar Allan Poe

The Jewels *7*
Guy de Maupassant

Gooseberries *14*
Anton Chekhov

The Tree of Knowledge *25*
Henry James

A Clean, Well-Lighted Place *40*
Ernest Hemingway

Youth *45*
Joseph Conrad

The Rocking-Horse Winner *75*
D. H. Lawrence

Bliss *91*
Katherine Mansfield

The Dead *104*
James Joyce

Little Herr Friedemann *145*
Thomas Mann

Sophistication *167*
Sherwood Anderson

The Story of My Dovecot *176*
Isaac Babel

The Devil and Daniel Webster *187*
Stephen Vincent Benét

A Rose for Emily *202*
William Faulkner

The Metamorphosis (Part I) *212*
Franz Kafka

The Wall *227*
Jean-Paul Sartre

Judas *245*
Frank O'Connor

Of This Time, Of That Place *255*
Lionel Trilling

The Lottery *293*
Shirley Jackson

The Ledge *303*
Lawrence Sargent Hall

THE TELL-TALE HEART

Edgar Allan Poe

Born in Boston in 1809 of actor parents, Poe was left an orphan at the age of three and was brought up by John Allan of Richmond, Virginia. He attended school in England, the University of Virginia for one year, and West Point for a short time. Poet, editor, literary critic and short-story writer, he, as much as any other writer, deserves the name of father of the modern short story. His story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) is considered to be the first detective story. "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843) is one of his finest tales of psychological horror.

True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am! but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to tell how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! Yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know

nothing. But you should have seen *me*. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work!

I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha!—would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when

my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out: "Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or grief—oh no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself: "It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all in vain. *All in vain*; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to *feel* the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and full upon the vulture eye.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray, as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And now—have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came

to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light