



BY THE BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF  
*Bread Upon the Waters*

DELL • 34075 • \$6.95 U.S. • \$8.95 CANADA

# IRWIN SHAW

*Short Stories:*

# FIVE DECADES

"FAR AND AWAY THE MAJOR BOOK OF  
IRWIN SHAW'S REMARKABLE CAREER."

*The New York Times Book Review*

L A U R E L

511  
L445  
S178

---

**IRWIN SHAW**  
**/SHORT STORIES:**  
**FIVE DECADES/**

---

Published by  
Dell Publishing Co., Inc.  
1 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza  
New York, New York 10017

Some of the stories in this volume have appeared in *Accent*, *Collier's Weekly*, *Esquire*, *Harper's*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *McCall's*, *Mademoiselle*, *The New Republic*, *The New Yorker*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *Playboy*, *Redbook*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Story Magazine*, and *This Week*.

Copyright © 1937, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1949, 1950, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1977, 1978 by Irwin Shaw

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of the Publisher, except where permitted by law. For information address Delacorte Press, New York, New York.

Laurel ® TM 674623, Dell Publishing Co., Inc.

ISBN: 0-440-34075-6

Reprinted by arrangement with Delacorte Press  
Printed in the United States of America  
First Laurel printing—January 1983



## Irwin Shaw Short Stories: Five Decades

"A rich feast of a book. . . . [Shaw is] a master craftsman of the short story . . . a shrewd and intelligent observer in perfect step with his times. . . . His stories move and inform, and, God forbid, they entertain."

—BRUCE JAY FRIEDMAN, *Esquire*

---

"There is never a wrong word, a phrase that makes you stop, reread, make sure you've gotten the sense right. . . . Coupled with the narrative gift is the ability to write with an ease and a clarity that only Fitzgerald had."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

---

"There is something in this collection for everyone."

—*The Wall Street Journal*

---

"Stories which, once read . . . [stay] with you the rest of your life. . . . [Shaw] put in five decades . . . turning out the kind of good hard declarative sentences that are about as easy to accomplish as a triple play on every play of every game every day in the year."

—JERRY TALLMER, *New York Post*

“A record of Shaw’s durability as a storyteller, this collection demonstrates his persistent interest in the private truths that underlie social facades, and the lost opportunities that bedevil us all.”

—*The Washington Post Book World*

---

“Shaw obviously revels in storytelling for its own sake and easily communicates his pleasure in man’s quirky and ironic progress . . . his moral insights rarely overburden the humanity of his characters. . . . Many pieces capture perfectly the modulations of mood and event in experience. . . . A fine and varied collection.”

—*Library Journal*

---

“He is a genuine professional. . . . He has a sharp and penetrating eye for social nuance and he is unfailingly entertaining. . . . He sees clearly, he understands what he sees, and he describes it pointedly. [These stories] are the work of a writer who knows what he is doing and . . . does it very well indeed.”

—JONATHAN YARDLEY, *Book World*

## *Books by Irwin Shaw*

### *Novels*

Voices of a Summer Day  
The Young Lions  
The Troubled Air  
Lucy Crown  
Two Weeks in Another Town  
Rich Man, Poor Man  
Evening in Byzantium  
Nightwork  
Beggarman, Thief  
The Top of the Hill  
Bread Upon the Waters

### *Short Story Collections*

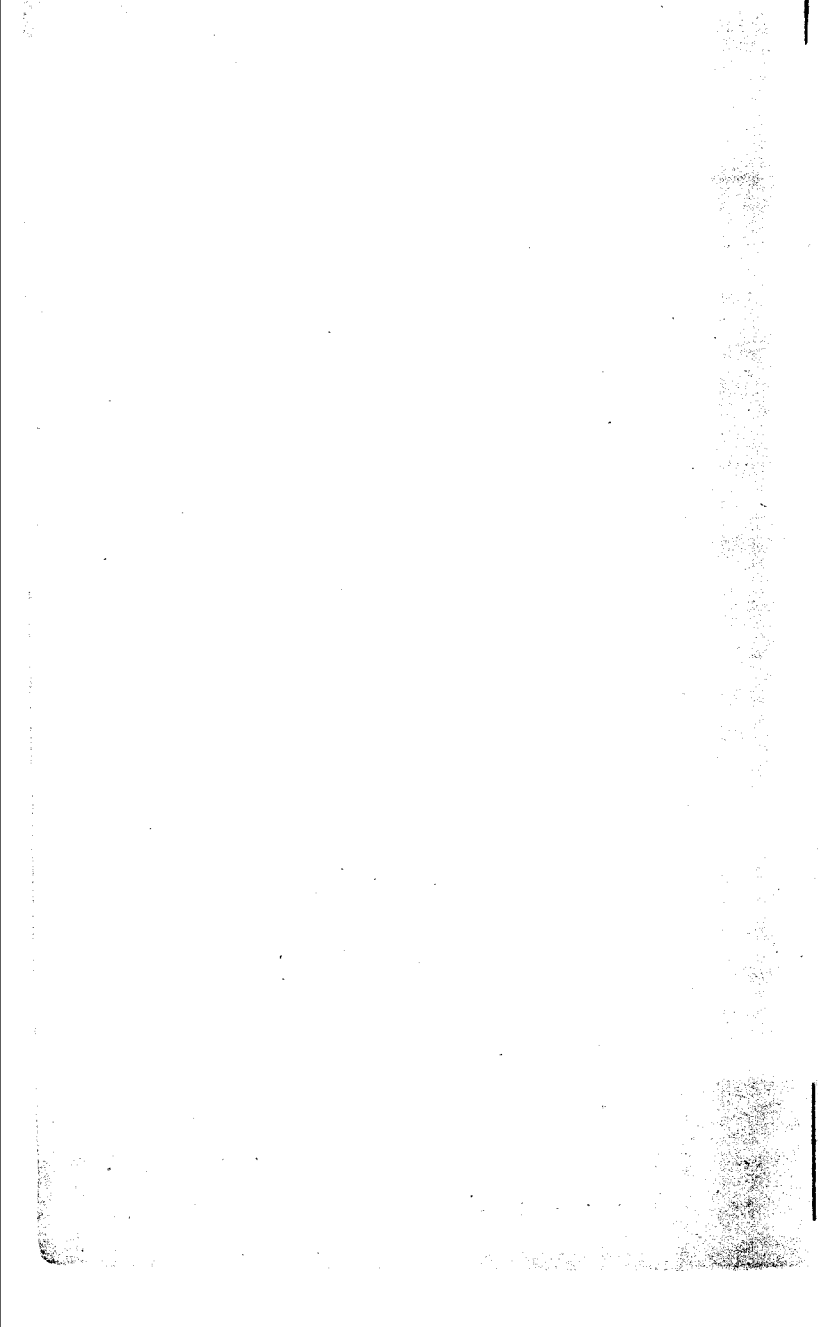
Sailor off the Bremen  
Welcome to the City  
Act of Faith  
Mixed Company  
Tip on a Dead Jockey  
Love on a Dark Street  
God Was Here But He Left Early  
Irwin Shaw Short Stories:  
Five Decades

### *Plays*

Bury the Dead  
The Gentle People  
Sons and Soldiers  
The Assassin  
Children from Their Games

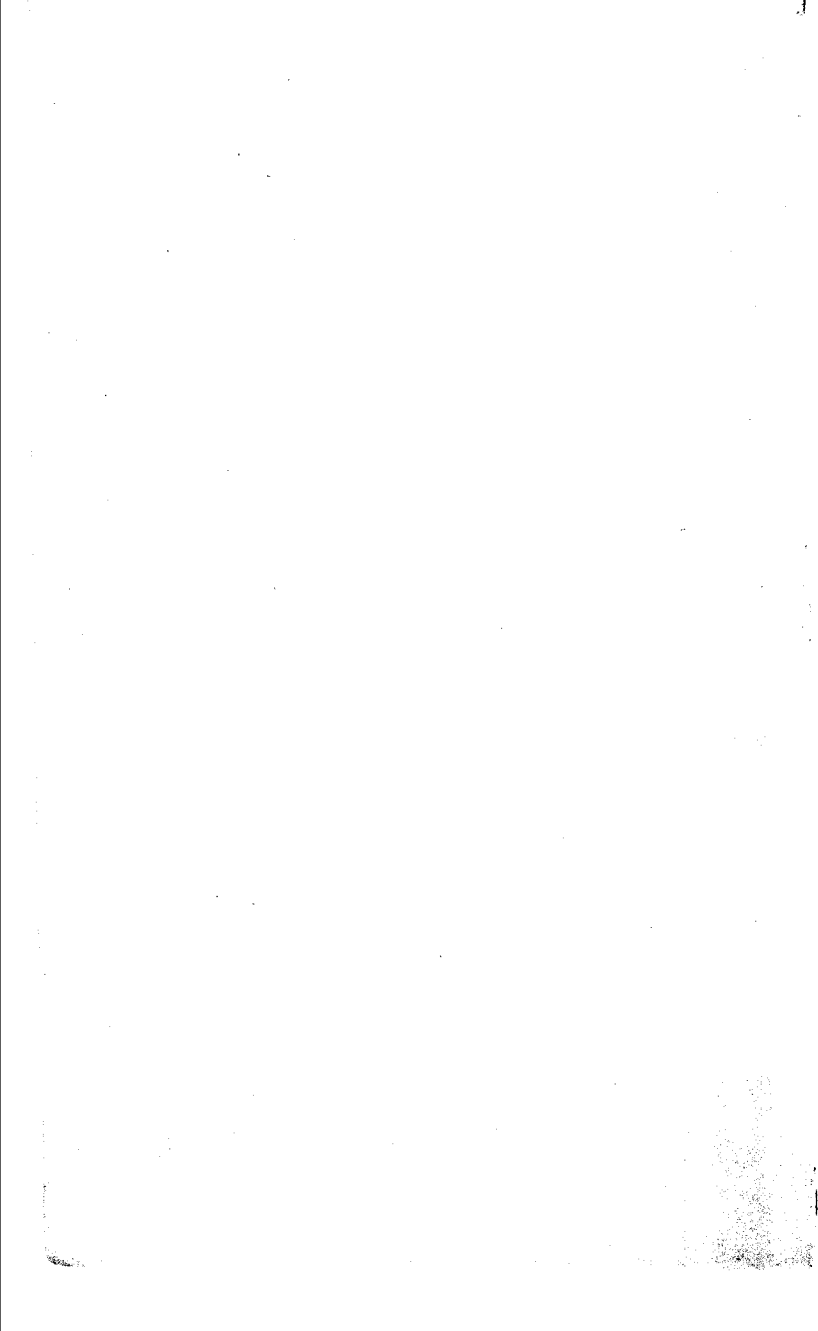
### *Nonfiction*

In the Company of Dolphins  
Paris! Paris!



***To Arthur Stanton***





## Contents

Introduction	11
The Eighty-Yard Run	13
Borough of Cemeteries	26
Main Currents of American Thought	33
Second Mortgage	42
Sailor off the Bremen	46
Strawberry Ice Cream Soda	56
Welcome to the City	67
The Girls in Their Summer Dresses	78
Search Through the Streets of the City	86
The Monument	94
I Stand by Dempsey	100
God on Friday Night	106
Return to Kansas City	112
Triumph of Justice	119
No Jury Would Convict	129
The Lament of Madam Rechevsky	134
The Deputy Sheriff	140
Stop Pushing, Rocky	149
"March, March on Down the Field"	157
Free Conscience, Void of Offence	162
Weep in Years to Come	171
The City Was in Total Darkness	177
Night, Birth and Opinion	191
Preach on the Dusty Roads	199
Hamlets of the World	207
Medal from Jerusalem	220

Walking Wounded	238	
Night in Algiers	255	
Gunners' Passage	259	
Retreat	275	
Act of Faith	284	
The Man with One Arm	300	
The Passion of Lance Corporal Hawkins		321
The Dry Rock	333	
Noises in the City	344	
The Indian in Depth of Night		355
Material Witness	360	
Little Henry Irving	366	
The House of Pain	374	
A Year to Learn the Language		381
The Greek General	412	
The Green Nude	424	
The Climate of Insomnia		445
Goldilocks at Graveside		464
Mixed Doubles	486	
A Wicked Story	495	
Age of Reason	505	
Peter Two	515	
The Sunny Banks of the River Lethe		523
The Man Who Married a French Wife		536
Voyage Out, Voyage Home	556	
Tip on a Dead Jockey	580	
The Inhabitants of Venus		611
In the French Style	633	
Then We Were Three	646	
God Was Here But He Left Early		674
Love on a Dark Street	694	
Small Saturday	714	
Pattern of Love	763	
Whispers in Bedlam	772	
Where All Things Wise and Fair Descend		817
Full Many a Flower	833	
Circle of Light	848	

## *Introduction*

I am a product of my times. I remember the end of World War I, the bells and whistles and cheering, and as an adolescent I profited briefly from the boom years. I suffered the Depression; exulted at the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt; drank my first glass of legal 3.2 beer the day Prohibition ended; mourned over Spain; listened to the Communist sirens; sensed the coming of World War II; went to that war; was shamed by the McCarthy era; saw the rebirth of Europe; marveled at the new generations of students; admired Kennedy; mourned over Vietnam. I have been both praised and blamed, all the while living my private life the best way I could.

I have written stories in Brooklyn, Greenwich Village, on Fifth Avenue, in the *New Yorker* office on 43rd Street, in Connecticut, Cairo, Algiers, London, Paris, Rome, the Basque country, on ships, in the Alps, in the Mojave Desert, and bits and pieces on transcontinental trains.

All these things, in one way or another, are reflected in my stories, which I now see as a record of the events of almost sixty years, all coming together in the imagination of one American. Of course there are gaps. Other writers have filled many of these but some remain and will never be filled.

Why does a man spend fifty years of his life in an occupation that is often painful? I once told a class I was teaching that writing is an intellectual contact sport, similar in some respects to football. The effort required can be exhausting, the goal unreached, and you are hurt on almost every play; but that doesn't deprive a man or a boy from getting peculiar pleasures from the game.

In a preface to an earlier collection I described some of those pleasures. Among them, I wrote, there is the reward of the storyteller, sitting cross-legged in the bazaar, filling the need of humanity in the humdrum course of the ordinary day for magic and distant

wonders, for disguised moralizing that will set everyday transactions into larger perspectives, for the compression of great matters into digestible portions, for the shaping of mysteries into sharply edged and comprehensible symbols.

Then there is the private and exquisite reward of escaping from the laws of consistency. Today you are sad and you tell a sad story. Tomorrow you are happy and your tale is a joyful one. You remember a woman whom you loved wholeheartedly and you celebrate her memory. You suffer from the wound of a woman who treated you badly and you denigrate womanhood. A saint has touched you and you are a priest. God has neglected you and you preach atheism.

In a novel or a play you must be a whole man. In a collection of stories you can be all the men or fragments of men, worthy and unworthy, who in different seasons abound in you. It is a luxury not to be scorned.

Originally this book was intended to contain all of my stories, but when the count was made the total came to eighty-four, and to include them all would have meant a formidably bulky and outrageously expensive book. Since my publishers and I agreed that we did not wish to produce a volume that the reader could neither carry nor afford, we fixed on sixty-three stories as a reasonable number and began the sad process of winnowing out the ones we would leave behind. It was a little like being the commander of a besieged town who knows he cannot evacuate all his troops and is forced to decide who shall go and who shall stay to be overrun by the enemy. And the enemy in this case might be oblivion.

The experience of going through the stories was also something like what is supposed to happen when a man is drowning, as scene after scene of his life passes before his eyes. If the drowning man is devout, it can be imagined that in those final moments he examines the scenes to determine the balance between his sins and his virtues with a view toward eventual salvation. Since I am not particularly devout, my chances for salvation lie in a place sometime in the future on a library shelf. These stories were selected, often with doubts and misgivings, with the hope that a spot on that distant shelf is waiting for them.

—IRWIN SHAW

1978

## *The Eighty-Yard Run*

The pass was high and wide and he jumped for it, feeling it slap flatly against his hands, as he shook his hips to throw off the halfback who was diving at him. The center floated by, his hands desperately brushing Darling's knee as Darling picked his feet up high and delicately ran over a blocker and an opposing linesman in a jumble on the ground near the scrimmage line. He had ten yards in the clear and picked up speed, breathing easily, feeling his thigh pads rising and falling against his legs, listening to the sound of cleats behind him, pulling away from them, watching the other backs heading him off toward the sideline, the whole picture, the men closing in on him, the blockers fighting for position, the ground he had to cross, all suddenly clear in his head, for the first time in his life not a meaningless confusion of men, sounds, speed. He smiled a little to himself as he ran, holding the ball lightly in front of him with his two hands, his knees pumping high, his hips twisting in the almost girlish run of a back in a broken field. The first halfback came at him and he fed him his leg, then swung at the last moment, took the shock of the man's shoulder without breaking stride, ran right through him, his cleats biting securely into the turf. There was only the safety man now, coming warily at him, his arms crooked, hands spread. Darling tucked the ball in, spurted at him, driving hard, hurling himself along, his legs pounding, knees high, all two hundred pounds bunched into controlled attack. He was sure he was going to get past the safety man. Without thought, his arms and legs working beautifully together, he headed right for the safety man, stiff-armed him, feeling blood spurt instantaneously from the man's nose onto his hand, seeing his face go awry, head turned, mouth pulled to one side. He pivoted away, keeping the arm locked, dropping the safety man as he ran easily toward the goal line, with the drumming of cleats diminishing behind him.

How long ago? It was autumn then, and the ground was getting

hard because the nights were cold and leaves from the maples around the stadium blew across the practice fields in gusts of wind, and the girls were beginning to put polo coats over their sweaters when they came to watch practice in the afternoons. . . . Fifteen years. Darling walked slowly over the same ground in the spring twilight, in his neat shoes, a man of thirty-five dressed in a double-breasted suit, ten pounds heavier in the fifteen years, but not fat, with the years between 1925 and 1940 showing in his face.

The coach was smiling quietly to himself and the assistant coaches were looking at each other with pleasure the way they always did when one of the second stringers suddenly did something fine, bringing credit to them, making their \$2,000 a year a tiny bit more secure.

Darling trotted back, smiling, breathing deeply but easily, feeling wonderful, not tired, though this was the tail end of practice and he'd run eighty yards. The sweat poured off his face and soaked his jersey and he liked the feeling, the warm moistness lubricating his skin like oil. Off in a corner of the field some players were punting and the smack of leather against the ball came pleasantly through the afternoon air. The freshmen were running signals on the next field and the quarterback's sharp voice, the pound of the eleven pairs of cleats, the "Dig, now dig!" of the coaches, the laughter of the players all somehow made him feel happy as he trotted back to midfield, listening to the applause and shouts of the students along the sidelines, knowing that after that run the coach would have to start him Saturday against Illinois.

Fifteen years, Darling thought, remembering the shower after the workout, the hot water steaming off his skin and the deep soapsuds and all the young voices singing with the water streaming down and towels going and managers running in and out and the sharp sweet smell of oil of wintergreen and everybody clapping him on the back as he dressed and Packard, the captain, who took being captain very seriously, coming over to him and shaking his hand and saying, "Darling, you're going to go places in the next two years."

The assistant manager fussed over him, wiping a cut on his leg with alcohol and iodine, the little sting making him realize suddenly how fresh and whole and solid his body felt. The manager slapped a piece of adhesive tape over the cut, and Darling noticed the sharp clean white of the tape against the ruddiness of the skin, fresh from the shower.

He dressed slowly, the softness of his shirt and the soft warmth of his wool socks and his flannel trousers a reward against his skin

after the harsh pressure of the shoulder harness and thigh and hip pads. He drank three glasses of cold water, the liquid reaching down coldly inside of him, soothing the harsh dry places in his throat and belly left by the sweat and running and shouting of practice.

Fifteen years.

The sun had gone down and the sky was green behind the stadium and he laughed quietly to himself as he looked at the stadium, rearing above the trees, and knew that on Saturday when the 70,000 voices roared as the team came running out onto the field, part of that enormous salute would be for him. He walked slowly, listening to the gravel crunch satisfactorily under his shoes in the still twilight, feeling his clothes swing lightly against his skin, breathing the thin evening air, feeling the wind move softly in his damp hair, wonderfully cool behind his ears and at the nape of his neck.

Louise was waiting for him at the road, in her car. The top was down and he noticed all over again, as he always did when he saw her, how pretty she was, the rough blonde hair and the large, inquiring eyes and the bright mouth, smiling now.

She threw the door open. "Were you good today?" she asked.

"Pretty good," he said. He climbed in, sank luxuriously into the soft leather, stretched his legs far out. He smiled, thinking of the eighty yards. "Pretty damn good."

She looked at him seriously for a moment, then scrambled around, like a little girl, kneeling on the seat next to him, grabbed him, her hands along his ears, and kissed him as he sprawled, head back, on the seat cushion. She let go of him, but kept her head close to his, over his. Darling reached up slowly and rubbed the back of his hand against her cheek, lit softly by a street lamp a hundred feet away. They looked at each other, smiling.

Louise drove down to the lake and they sat there silently, watching the moon rise behind the hills on the other side. Finally he reached over, pulled her gently to him, kissed her. Her lips grew soft, her body sank into his, tears formed slowly in her eyes. He knew, for the first time, that he could do whatever he wanted with her.

"Tonight," he said. "I'll call for you at seven-thirty. Can you get out?"

She looked at him. She was smiling, but the tears were still full in her eyes. "All right," she said. "I'll get out. How about you? Won't the coach raise hell?"

Darling grinned. "I got the coach in the palm of my hand," he said. "Can you wait till seven-thirty?"



She grinned back at him. "No," she said.

They kissed and she started the car and they went back to town for dinner. He sang on the way home.

Christian Darling, thirty-five years old, sat on the frail spring grass, greener now than it ever would be again on the practice field, looked thoughtfully up at the stadium, a deserted ruin in the twilight. He had started on the first team that Saturday and every Saturday after that for the next two years, but it had never been as satisfactory as it should have been. He never had broken away, the longest run he'd ever made was thirty-five yards, and that in a game that was already won, and then that kid had come up from the third team, Diederich, a blank-faced German kid from Wisconsin, who ran like a bull, ripping lines to pieces Saturday after Saturday, plowing through, never getting hurt, never changing his expression, scoring more points, gaining more ground than all the rest of the team put together, making everybody's All-American, carrying the ball three times out of four, keeping everybody else out of the headlines. Darling was a good blocker and he spent his Saturday afternoons working on the big Swedes and Polacks who played tackle and end for Michigan, Illinois, Purdue, hurling into huge pile-ups, bobbing his head wildly to elude the great raw hands swinging like meat-cleavers at him as he went charging in to open up holes for Diederich coming through like a locomotive behind him. Still, it wasn't so bad. Everybody liked him and he did his job and he was pointed out on the campus and boys always felt important when they introduced their girls to him at their proms, and Louise loved him and watched him faithfully in the games, even in the mud, when your own mother wouldn't know you, and drove him around in her car keeping the top down because she was proud of him and wanted to show everybody that she was Christian Darling's girl. She bought him crazy presents because her father was rich, watches, pipes, humidors, an icebox for beer for his room, curtains, wallets, a fifty-dollar dictionary.

"You'll spend every cent your old man owns," Darling protested once when she showed up at his rooms with seven different packages in her arms and tossed them onto the couch.

"Kiss me," Louise said, "and shut up."

"Do you want to break your poor old man?"

"I don't mind. I want to buy you presents."

"Why?"

"It makes me feel good. Kiss me. I don't know why. Did you know that you're an important figure?"