



## **Remember Why You Fear Me: The Best Dark Fiction of Robert Shearman**

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## **Remember Why You Fear Me: The Best Dark Fiction of Robert Shearman** Robert Shearman

A woman rejects her husband's heart—and gives it back to him, still beating, in a plastic box. A little boy betrays his father to the harsh mercies of Santa Claus. A widower suspects his dead wife's face is growing over his own. A man goes to Hell, and finds he's roommate to the ghost of Hitler's pet dog. Giant spiders, killer angels, ghost cat photography, and the haunted house right at the centre of the Garden of Eden.

Deliciously frightening, darkly satirical, and always unexpected, Robert Shearman has won the World Fantasy Award, the British Fantasy Award, the Shirley Jackson Award, and the Edge Hill Reader's Prize. *Remember Why You Fear Me* gathers together his best dark fiction, the most celebrated stories from his acclaimed books, and ten new tales that have never been collected before.

This ebook contains four bonus novelettes drawn from throughout Shearman's impressive career: "Tiny Deaths," "Jolly Roger," "The Big Boy's Big Book of Tricks," and the previously unpublished "The Girl from Ipanema."

## **Remember Why You Fear Me: The Best Dark Fiction of Robert Shearman Details**

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## From Reader Review Remember Why You Fear Me: The Best Dark Fiction of Robert Shearman for online ebook

### Lynette says

I would consider Rob Shearman's work to be comparable to that of Neil Gaiman's - however, I actually enjoy Shearman's stories, while I can barely get through Gaiman's. When I read Shearman, I have a hard time stopping, and usually end up reading half a dozen stories and forget to do things like make dinner. His stories are unique, original, and just twisted enough without becoming totally "out there" (not sure how to else to describe it ...). The only thing I don't like is the frequent sexual references, but that's my own personal preference. Overall, that didn't sully my enjoyment of this collection.

The best thing about Shearman's writing is that all of his characters exist. What I mean is that they have so much depth that I feel as if he's writing about someone he knows well. Even in the shortest of stories, I become invested in each character. There is also something about his style which I enjoy, but can't quite explain.

Aside from the fact that I like his writing, Rob Shearman is a lovely man. I've met him at the Doctor Who convention Chicago TARDIS and chatted with him on Twitter, and he is incredibly open and friendly. So, if you enjoy his work, drop him a line to let him know. And check out [justsosospecial.com](http://justsosospecial.com) to read more of his hundred stories project.

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### Andrew says

*He went into the spare room. She'd been through the cupboards, there was debris all over the bed. From an empty shoebox she'd found his heart. She was holding it in one palm—he'd forgotten how, in death, it had grown so small and wizened.*

*"Put that back," he said. "That isn't yours anymore."*

*"Look," she said softly. "Look." And she began to stroke it. She blew on it gently.*

*"It's not yours," he said, uselessly.*

*And as he watched, the rock cracked. Pink tissue broke through the stone and bone. "Look," she said again. It was struggling, and then it managed a beat, and once it had managed one, it seemed all too happy to beat again. "Look," she said, and kissed it. The last of the rock crumbled away at her touch. "I love you," she said. "Look. I love you. Look how much." And she offered his heart out to him, as good to new.*

*Dazedly he reached for it. She smiled, nodded. He took hold of it. Looked at it, as it swelled with new life. And then he dug his fingernails in, dug them in deep, dug 'til it bled. "No," she said. And began squeezing hard, so that one of the ventricles bulged then burst. "No, stop!" And ripped it apart, tearing at it, pulling off goblets of it, showering them on to the spare room carpet.*

*"I told you," he said. "It isn't yours. You gave it back."*

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Remember Why You Fear Me: The Best Dark Fiction of Robert Shearman collects twenty of the World Fantasy Award-winning author's most accomplished short stories, fourteen of which have seen previous publication between 2006 and 2012.

Shearman has had to date a rather illustrious writing career; he's won several playwriting awards, has been associated with England's Royal National Theatre, and worked on the BBC series *The Chain Gang* and *Doctor Who*. His short fiction is no less respected, having taken home the British Fantasy Award, the Shirley Jackson Award, and as previously mentioned, the World Fantasy Award. The stories collected in this publication, many of which have been shortlisted for the British Fantasy Award and the World Fantasy Award, run the range between magical realism, surrealism, flat-out horror, and the not-so-plain, not-so-ordinary, dark and dreary crevasses of the imagination.

Death, children, family, abandonment, and legacy are the core unifying elements among the stories collected in *Remember Why You Fear Me*. In "Mortal Coil," when everyone in the world learns the hows, whys, and whens of their inevitable deaths, a young man without a funeral of his own to look forward to becomes a reluctant executioner; the mother of "So Proud" is giving birth to furniture and appliances she neither wants nor has use for; the divorced father at the centre of "Cold Snap" grows apart from his son when his ex-wife and the new man in her life divide his attention, and a contract with Santa Claus written long ago has tragic, antler-ific consequences; "One More Bloody Miracle After Another" focuses on a two-year-old girl's immaculate conception and her mother's furious, controlling nature; and "The Dark Space in the House in the House in the Garden at the Centre of the World" depicts the harsh reality that approaches all too suddenly when one abandons faith for fact, when children decide to extricate themselves from their parents' influence in order to craft legacies of their own.

Shearman's voice has tremendous range, inhabiting each tale in unique, often unexpected ways. Most notable in this regard is the second story in the collection, "George Clooney's Moustache," which is told from the perspective of a young girl, her age never specified, who falls in love with the man who has abducted her. As Stockholm syndrome takes effect, the captive becomes the captor, spurned by the man's apparent lack of affection. The story itself is childish in tone, and because her age is deliberately obscured, it's not clear how much time passes over the course of the story. The block paragraphs and run-on sentences are indicative of a mind that has never fully matured. The loss of innocence is palpable and unsettling.

Not every story in the collection is especially horrifying. Point of fact, some are downright comical... until they're not. For example, "Damned if You Don't," which imagines a Hell so overpopulated that the dead are sent back to the world above as shades of their former selves and Hitler's dog, Woofie, befriends his Hell-sent roommate, Martin. And why was Woofie sent to Hell? For being Hitler's dog and nothing else... certainly not the tacit approval of death and genocide he offers Martin near the story's end. Because as Woofie said to Hitler one fateful day, "If you're going to Hell for one Jew, then why not for a hundred? For a hundred thousand. For six million. If you're going to be damned anyway, at least be damned for something impressive." Ridiculous. Absurd. And chilling.

The strongest titles in the collection are "Good Grief," "Pang" (the strongest of the lot, in my ever so humble opinion, and the one quoted at the top of this review), "Favourite," "Featherweight," and "Clown Envy." The latter is also the most terrifying in the collection... because fuck clowns, that's why.

Most impressive is how with such limited space for each story Shearman managed, on several occasions, to really get under my skin. It was never with the more horrifying case studies (but seriously, fuck you,

clowns), rather I was undone by the most obvious knife wounds of humanity—small cuts that unexpectedly grazed the surface of some of the more poignant tales: by Alex's attempts to blame the death of his drunk-driving wife on the woman she accidentally killed in a head-on collision in “Good Grief;” or the quiet, sad serenity of one man witnessing the premature death of the family he never got to develop in “Featherweight.”

“Blue Crayon, Yellow Crayon” is the most esoteric in the collection, yet still strangely uplifting. However, as much cannot be said for “Elementary Problems of Photography (Number Three): An Analysis, and Preferred Solution” and “Jason Zerrillo is an Annoying Prick,” the only weak entries in the entire collection.

There are still several stories in this collection I've not touched upon, and each and every one of them is worth your time. This is the first of Shearman's writing I've been exposed to, and it will not be the last. *Remember Why You Fear Me: The Best Dark Fiction of Robert Shearman* is a strong collection of genre fiction—one of the strongest I've come across in some time.

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### **gwen says**

I'm in the process of reading through RWYFM at the moment, so this review may or may not be subject to change once I've delved a little deeper. Nonetheless, I'm about halfway through, and I'm a little disappointed / confused as to where the alleged terror is hiding itself. Am I missing something subtle and personal that's managed to resonate with others? Is it because I'm too young to understand the general theme of losing a spouse, etc? Really, I don't know. I came across this collection after reading Paul Tremblay's "In the Meantime", expecting something genuinely disturbing and atmospheric. So far, I really just want to get these couples to counseling. Two stars for now, as I can absolutely see how some readers would find Shearman's work delectable; personally, I need a little more surrealism and a little less humor to be genuinely spooked.

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### **Lianne says**

*Remember Why You Fear Me* is a collection of short stories ranging from psychological suspense to poignant reflections on life and love (with an eerie twist) to downright horror-themed scenarios. Shearman's stories are reminiscent (to me, at least) of Neil Gaiman's and Catherynne Valente's storytelling in his ability to take simple scenarios and everyday items and completely turn them on their heads, making the stories wholly unique. I enjoyed learning along the way what was unique about the setting of each particular story and themes that were prevalent in each of them.

You could read the rest of my review of the book over at my blog:  
<http://www.rulethewaves.net/blog/?p=6511>

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### **Sara Ann says**

Just incredible.

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## **Amy says**

There is a lot of discussion (mainly in the foreword and afterword of the book) about whether these are horror stories. I would say absolutely, just not in a gory "genre" way...more literary and psychological in nature. Anyway, I thought these stories were great and super memorable. Many start out with normal domestic settings, but then a rabbit with bat wings or cherubs with sharp teeth appear. I really liked the story about Santa and the couple who literally give each other their hearts. Really I don't think there's a bad one in the bunch...so bizarre and yet focused on really normal human emotions.

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## **Pustulio says**

Tiene unas historias bien chiiingonas, y otras un poco flojonas o que más bien no me interesaron tanto. Mi favorita es la de santa clausssss.

Definitivamente volvería a leer algo de Roberttttz

Entiendo porque lo ponen de horror pero no siento que sea tanto horror o algo es más algo oscuro.

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## **Kat says**

It took me over a month to read this collection of short stories. Not because they weren't good or because I didn't enjoy them, but BECAUSE they are so good and I DID enjoy them. I couldn't absorb more than two or three stories at a time because they did their job a little too well. Some of them scared me, but most left this sense of disquiet, of the edges of the world not quite fitting together anymore and you don't want to look into the cracks in between. It's psychological horror done very well, drawing on old fears but presenting them in a new way. In fact, many of these stories have powerful element of magical realism to them. Bizarre things happen that are simply part of the characters' worlds and then even THAT gets turned on its head! It's difficult to get the uncanny to feel normal and than have something even more uncanny happen to disturb this new status quo.

So if you like short stories, horror, and/or dark fiction, especially if you want to write in any of those areas, I definitely recommend reading "Remember Why You Fear Me."

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## **Rosie says**

The better part of the stories are about divorce or people cheating on their spouses, the remaining are about broken or failing relationships of various other types, with one or two exceptions.

I enjoyed the ideas behind a number of the stories in the collection but rarely appreciated the execution. I could count on one hand the ones I'd actually recommend to someone (and I don't know that I'd even need all the fingers). There are 21 tales included in the volume.

For a book I found in the Horror section I think two maybe three of the stories actually creeped me out a little.

All in all, I'd say don't bother picking it up.

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### **Sebastian says**

Good grief, reading this was almost physical as much as emotional. There is a *something* to Shearman's style that just makes these weird stories click and feel right, or rather, feel the right kind of absolutely bloody godsdamn *wrong*. They are listed as horror, but it is not the horror of things going *bump* in the night, not the horror of things going *boo!* in your face, and most certainly not the horror of things going *splat!* over the floor (though there is plenty of all of that). Shearman's horror is the horror of mind-numbing day-to-day existence, of distance and alienation, of raging depression. The fact that he references vacations in Tenerife as I was reading this on vacation in Tenerife, the fact that he speaks of people trying to get back to their loved ones as I was stuck hundreds of miles away from home probably just added vodka to the gasoline.

Normally I detest ageism, or really any kind of -ism in general, but with Shearman, I suspect one needs to pack a few years under the belt and have a family of one's own before feeling the full painful shred this collection of fine-cut gems can inflict on their reader.

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### **K.E. says**

My full review is available on the The Crow's Caw: <http://t.co/t1weZ8NA>

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### **Samaire Provost says**

Creepy! :)

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### **Maggie says**

I discovered this author after reading one of his stories in an anthology. I read his story many times because I couldn't get a handle on it at all. I made Brian read it as well. There was just something "wrong" about it that was incredibly creepy.

So I found his anthologies and wanted to read them. Unfortunately, our library system carries none of his works. Undaunted, I asked my mom to get the one that her library system carried, and she did. I read this fairly quickly, over the span of a couple of days. Not all the stories are winners, but the ones that are are excellent. I would recommend this to anyone who enjoys Neil Gaiman's short stories...there's a lot of similarity in the feel of them. I would also recommend this to anyone who just plain enjoys a WTF kind of story because you won't be disappointed.

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### **Clayton says**

These are stories about regular people with regular lives, just like you and me. They have daily problems with love and marriage and religion and sex. But they have the unfortunate fate of living in a universe just slightly off from ours.

Each and every story left me with an empty feeling of What The Hell Did I Just Read, which was jarring and uncomfortable at first. But as I ventured on through the book, I began to realize that his style is that of nightmares, and it's the same exact feeling I get after surviving one of those.

Expect no morals or comfort from these tales.

Some of the most lasting images I've ever read. I hope that if you read this book, you will opt for the ebook version, because the bonus stories at the end are some of the brightest stars in this collection of darkness.

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### **Alexandra says**

The way another reviewer describe this was perfect- Shearman's stories are like nightmares. They're beautifully written, surreal, eerie. Many times the meaning is vague- not so vague that you don't understand it, but vague enough to make it difficult to put into words. Overall, though, this book left me feeling uneasy and with an unsettled feeling in the pit of my stomach, which is what I absolutely love to find in a book.

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