

LOOK BUSY

One hundred 100-word stories
by and for the easily distracted



by Jane McDermott

In Memory of Michael Rubin, Fourteen Hills Press annually publishes a student work of exceptional accomplishment. Each book is selected through an open competition by an independent judge. Funding is provided by the students of SFSU through the Instructionally Related Activities Fund.

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Disclaimer

These stories are works of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either products of the author's imagination or are used factiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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Set in Cochin.

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Winner of the 2014 Michael Rubin Book Award
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for all the odd girls



One

All bees know what they're supposed to be doing and do what they're supposed to do. They work tirelessly and in unison for the benefit of the hive, not themselves. In their lifetime they work all aspects of the hive and produce a great product. Their lives are short, just six weeks, but they work in service to the hive until their wings are frayed. Unless they die from disease or misadventure, they return to the hive to die. After they are dead, their bee sisters sweep them out of the hive and go back to work.

Bees are crazy.



Two

“For the love of God, woman, open this door!”

A few times a month, the pounding and pleading sometimes went on for nearly an hour. My mother would quietly but firmly talk to him through the closed door as he shouted and begged.

“Open the door, missus! Please, open up!” he’d cry.

“Mr. Sullivan,” she’d say over and over. “Go home. This is not your house. You live down the road. Go home.”

Sometimes the police would come, but usually my mother would manage to convince him of his error and, sobbing, he’d go try his luck at another door.



Eight

Out for a walk on a cloudless Saturday morning, I wandered into a yard sale. The yard was strewn with household goods and garden tools—the detritus of domestic life.

Shielded from the sun, a red-haired woman was thumbing through a magazine while a red-haired baby chewed her way through a copy of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*.

“How much for the kid?” I asked.

She squinted up at me. “Make me an offer,” she said. “I’ve got two more in the back yard. I’ll give you a good deal on the set.”

And that’s how Maureen Flaherty and I became friends.



Forty-Two

Cheryl Bailey had cooties. Everyone knew this. She had many siblings, the family had no money, and her mother had only one arm. No one was sure how or if any of these facts contributed to Cheryl's cootiness, but we were certain that they must have somehow.

Once, we were learning a square dance and everyone quickly paired up. I was left with Cheryl. She wouldn't even make eye contact. When the music began I reluctantly took her hand and it was remarkably smooth and soft. It was a lovely hand. It felt like it had never been held before.