

Tiny Crimes: Very Short Tales of Mystery and Murder

Edited by Lincoln Michel and Nadxieli Nieto

In this literary collection that will appeal to fans of flash fiction, editors Michel and Nieto offer 40 original examples of crime and (occasional) punishment "short enough to be read during a coffee break or a corporate break-in." With only a few hundred words at their disposal, the authors find inventive ways to tell their compact tales of mystery, often eschewing ornate whodunit plots for varied storytelling techniques. Christian Hayden's "Exit Interview" features only one side of a phone conversation as the duplicitous protagonist hurtles toward his own demise; Adam Hirsch's "Airport Paperback" is a heavily redacted letter from a prisoner to his beloved Maria; Carmen Maria Machado's "Mary When You Follow Her" is a bravura performance consisting of one long sentence. The tenor of each piece varies from the dreamlike (Laura van den Berg's "Friends") to the deliciously gruesome (Richie Navarez's "Withhold the Dawn"). Other notable efforts include stories from international authors such as Yuri Herrera and Fuminori Nakamura, with the original text running alongside the English version. Though some stories succeed in delivering suspenseful thrills more than others, in all cases a hard-boiled attitude prevails, and the range of writers from leading independent presses is impressive. **VERDICT** Recommended for fans of Akashic Books's long-running and popular geographic "Noir" series.

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