

Sorry I Worried You (Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction)

Gary Fincke

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In these twelve intelligent tales, seasoned poet and story writer Gary Fincke reconciles lost hope and quiet despair with small blessings and ultimate redemption. In his world, as easily as one man becomes a hero, another is riddled with failure. Fincke weaves together the large and small tragedies of daily life to create an inescapable, yet at times oddly comforting, reality. His characters inhabit a world of strip malls and fast-food joints, low-down jobs and physical ailments, lottery tickets and cheap beer. Here, everyone and everything is suspicious, and only the luck of the draw determines who, if anyone, will survive.

In the title story, Ben, a fifty-year-old bookstore clerk facing the possibility of prostate cancer, feels his life spiraling out of control as he endures his female doctor's examinations with childlike embarrassment on the one hand and struggles to conceal his age from his teenybopper coworkers on the other. Ben's only consolation is that "every day he heard about something a hundred times worse." In "Gatsby, Tender, Paradise," Bridgeford encounters a group of lightning strike and electrocution victims and feels lucky to have survived several light-switch shocks—the same type of shocks that have permanently disabled one man in the group. Such are the small but important blessings that ultimately rescue Fincke's characters from despair. Here at last is someone who can articulate both our constant, mortal desire to transcend ordinary experience and our simultaneous comfort in the unremarkable and familiar.



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