

That Book of Short Stories I Wanted To Write

**Because people always said
I should write a book.**

GLEN CHARLOW

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The first line of my story called, “The Sea Always Called Him Back” was inspired by the first line of Todd S. Purdum’s book called “Desi Arnaz: The Man Who Invented Television”. No other part of that story has anything to do with Desi Arnaz.

Thanks to my friends Eva Rogers and Michael Broad for proofing and giving me their input on the writing of this book. Thanks, also, to my friend Steven Jon Kaplan for writing the introduction.

Copies of this book can be purchased at:
www.glencharlow.com/book

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INTRODUCTION

BY STEVEN JON KAPLAN

Glen has created a delightful first collection of stories, some which he wrote a long time ago, and others which are very recent. As my wife Karen had noticed, they share a common theme of discovery. We all yearn to find something new in our lives and to experience real surprise. The unexpected twists keep you riveted from start to finish. When you are reading Glen's tales, you never know for sure what is going to happen because anything is possible, even something which may be supernatural.

There is an old saying that what goes around comes around, which some people call karma. The characters will not always get what they think they want in these stories, but by the end of each tale, everyone gets what they deserve. The precise details are consistently alive and make you believe that you are really there.

It is impressive that these stories cover such a wide range of themes. They contain a locked-room murder mystery, detective fiction, a Western, magical realism, soap opera, reminiscences, horror, science fiction, fable, children's tales, and sometimes more than one of the above in a single story. Glen handles all of these deftly, as though he had been writing all of these his entire life. Which is partly true, since some of them go back several decades. Each one is connected in some ways to the others, and yet each one is delightful all by itself.

You will appreciate Glen's wry sense of humor. He doesn't try to impress you with slapstick or farce or some other obvious approach. It is as though he is telling you everything with a straight face, and you have to figure out for yourself that he's often kidding you. In this way, Glen's lifelong experience with acting shines through in his fiction. You ask yourself if you should laugh or cry, and then you end up doing both.

I am sure that you will end up, as I did, rereading these stories more than once. Like high-quality comfort food prepared by a competent chef, they are both quirky and satisfying. I am looking forward to more tales by this talented author.

A Boy and His Dog



When Eli found Rusty, the little brown dog was shivering beneath an old park bench after a summer storm. One floppy ear stood straight up, the other refused to cooperate, and his tail thumped the muddy ground the moment Eli knelt beside him.

"I guess you were waiting for me," Eli whispered.

From that day on, they were rarely apart.

Rusty walked Eli to the school bus every morning and greeted him every afternoon with enough excitement to make the longest school day disappear. They explored creeks, climbed hills, and spent lazy evenings watching fireflies blink across the backyard. Wherever Eli went, Rusty wasn't far behind.

As the years passed, Eli grew taller. His voice deepened, his world became busier, and childhood slowly slipped away. Rusty, however, never changed in the ways that mattered. His muzzle turned gray, his steps became slower, but every time Eli came home, that familiar tail still wagged with the same joy.

One autumn afternoon, Eli sat on the porch beside his old friend. Rusty rested his head on the boy's knee and sighed contentedly as golden leaves drifted through the yard.

"You've been the best friend I've ever had," Eli said softly.

Rusty didn't answer with words. He simply looked up with warm, trusting eyes that had never once judged, doubted, or turned away.

Sometimes love doesn't need a voice.

It only needs someone who is always there.

And for one lucky boy and one faithful dog, that was more than enough.



The Reflection's Turn



The antique mirror that hung in the hallway of Elena's new apartment did not show the world as it was. It was a heavy, tarnished piece with a silver-gilt frame that felt slightly too cold to the touch, even in the dead of summer.

On her first night in the flat, Elena paused to adjust her collar before bed. When she looked into the glass, she didn't see her own tired eyes or her messy brown hair. Instead, she saw a tall woman with pale skin, dark hair pinned back in an elegant 1920s style, and a high-necked black lace dress. The woman was standing perfectly still in the reflection, staring directly out at Elena with an expression of quiet, agonizing grief.

Elena froze, her breath catching in her throat. She blinked hard, expecting the trick of the light to vanish. But when she moved her right hand to touch her face, the reflection didn't mimic her. The woman in the mirror kept her hands clasped tightly in front of her dress, her chest rising and falling in a slow, rhythmic breath that didn't belong to Elena.

Panicked, Elena reached out and turned on the overhead hallway light. The sudden glare caused the glass to flash, and instantly, her own familiar reflection snapped back into place. She laughed nervously, chalking it up to moving-day exhaustion.

But the next morning, it happened again.

Elena was brushing her teeth, looking down at the sink. When she raised her head to rinse her mouth, the mirror didn't reflect the brightly lit bathroom. It showed a dimly lit room with heavy velvet drapes. The elegant woman was there again, sitting at a vanity table that occupied the exact space where Elena's sink should be.

This time, the woman was crying. Colorless, silent tears tracked down her pale cheeks. She looked up, locked eyes with Elena through the glass, and lifted a slender hand, pressing her palm flat against the inside of the mirror.

Instantly, Elena felt a freezing chill bloom across her own palm, even though her hands were resting at her sides.

Over the next week, the boundary between the two sides began to decay. Elena stopped looking at the mirror entirely, draping a heavy wool blanket over the frame. Yet, whenever she walked past it in the dark, she could hear the faint, unmistakable sound of fingernails softly tapping against the glass from the inside—*tap, tap, tap*—as if demanding to be let out.

On the seventh night, a sudden thunderstorm knocked out the building's power. Plunged into total pitch blackness, Elena guided her way down the hallway using the flashlight on her phone. As she passed the mirror, she noticed the blanket had slipped to the floor.

She stopped, raising the phone's beam to the glass.

The light didn't bounce back. The flashlight beam traveled *through* the mirror, illuminating the dark, velvet-draped room on the other side. The woman was standing right at

the edge of the glass. But she wasn't crying anymore. She was smiling—a wide, desperate, triumphant smile.

Before Elena could pull away, the reflection reached out. Two pale, solid hands thrust through the silver surface of the mirror, grabbing Elena by the collar of her shirt. The grip was impossibly cold, like iron dipped in ice.

With a violent, breathless jerk, Elena was pulled forward. The world spun, tasting faintly of old silver and dust.

A second later, the hallway was silent again. The storm outside rumbled softly.

When the power flickered back on a few minutes later, the hallway light illuminated the antique frame. Inside the glass, a young woman with brown hair and a modern t-shirt stood trapped in a velvet-draped room, frantically pounding her fists against an unbreakable wall of silver.

And out in the real hallway, a tall woman with dark, pinned-back hair smoothed down her high-necked black dress, took a deep, living breath of the warm summer air, and walked away into the apartment.

Days turned into weeks, and the new Elena fitted seamlessly into the neighborhood, though her habits were curiously out of step with the modern world. She spent hours simply standing on the street corner, staring up at the neon signs and roaring traffic with the wide, hungry eyes of a time traveler suddenly dropped into paradise. Meanwhile, back in the quiet hallway of the apartment, the antique frame remained empty whenever the sun was out. But every evening, precisely at twilight, a faint,

rhythmic scratching would resume from deep within the glass, as a desperate pair of hands tried to find the seam where the reflection ended and the real world began.



About the Author

Glen Charlow is a Graphic Designer as well as an Actor and Singer. As a graphic designer in the performing arts, Glen has worked on many cabaret and off-Broadway shows, serving as the graphic designer for many prestigious theaters and production companies in the United States. His advertising placement has been in many production houses and agencies in New York. His experience with editing, design, color and typography, has been applied to such award-winning publications as Sheet Music Magazine and The Sondheim Review, as well as nightclubs around the NYC area. His design business helps promote talent to the next level by creating the perfect print and web campaign.

As an actor, he has performed such memorable, favorite roles as Cosmo Brown in *Singin' in the Rain*, Blore in *Ten Little Indians*, and Eddie Ryan in *Funny Girl*. He made his Off-Broadway debut in *Grandma Sylvia's Funeral* (1998) when he went on as an understudy for the role of SkyBoy.

For fun, Glen became a Lucille Ball collector when he moved to New York in 1983 and has since become recognized by many as having one of the largest Lucy collections around. Some may remember him from the A&E Biography when they did their tribute to Lucille Ball & Desi Arnaz. www.everything-lucy.com. Glen now resides in Baltimore with his two cats.

Glen's book cover designs can be seen on Karen B. Kaplan's "Curiosity Seekers", as well as "Morning Uplift" by Eva Rogers, and "Stop Hiding, Start Living" by Todd Ross. www.gcdtp.com, www.glencharlow.com.

"You really ought to write a book."

For years, author **Glen Charlow** heard that exact phrase from friends, family, and amused strangers who crossed his path. This book is the answer to that dare.



That **Book of Short Stories I Wanted To Write** is a wildly imaginative, genre-bending debut anthology designed for readers who love fast-paced narratives, sharp wit, and sudden, breathtaking twists. Moving effortlessly between the absurdly hilarious and the deeply atmospheric, this collection proves that the best stories are the ones we feel compelled to share.

Inside this volume, you will discover:

- **The Phantom's Final Waltz:** A tense, classic backstage murder mystery at a historic playhouse, where a toxic leading man meets a bitter end and a trail of rare violet ink reveals a deadly web of jealousy.
- **The Fifth Dimension Has Some 'Splaining to Do:** A cozy evening of vintage television nostalgia that spins into a chaotic, surreal sci-fi crossover when a haunted vacuum-tube TV malfunctions at midnight.
- **The Reflection's Turn:** A chilling, slow-burn horror story about an antique hallway mirror that refuses to reflect the present day, revealing a silent, weeping woman from the past who wants out.

From triumph on the bowling lanes to cosmic anomalies in the living room, Charlow weaves a tapestry of stories that tickle the funny bone, quicken the pulse, and linger in the mind long after the final page is turned.

The wait is over. Open the cover, dim the lights, and finally read the book everyone's been talking about.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Glen is a Graphic Designer as well as an Actor/Singer. He resides in Baltimore with his two cats. His book cover designs can be seen on Karen B. Kaplan's "Curiosity Seekers", as well as "Morning Uplift" by Eva Rogers, and "Stop Hiding, Start Living" by Todd Ross.



Glen's two kids Sasha & Smokey

Cover design
by **GLEN CHARLOW**

