

VINYED

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Flash & Shorts Collection # 1

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Eduard Meinema

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Vinyed

Flash & Shorts Collection # 1

A collection of short and ultra-short stories with an unexpected twist (Twisted Tales). Imaginative, surprising and terrifying. In this issue you will find the following seven stories:

- The Dikehouse

The Woldring family is ready to move into a beautiful house on a dike. An old building in the middle of the Dutch fruit production county 'The Betuwe' where the Woldrings expect to escape the bustle of the citylife. The removal does not run as smooth as planned. Calamity and an unexpected, bizarre discovery are waiting behind the doors of the Woldrings' new house. The troublesome circumstances soon show that the family ties are not as tight as thought. A removal with unpleasant consequences that no one could imagine...

- Allotment

Incidents of war have caused a never ending stream of refugees: people moving up north, trying to escape the warzone in the Middle East. Politicians and civilians disagree on measurements to be taken. Meanwhile society grows suspicious about the real intentions of the refugees. Are they really escaping war? Merely seeking for luck? Or is something else going on...?

- Call it a day

You know what they say: “There is no elevator that will lead you to success. You have to climb the stairs yourself.” And once you get there, you will find out: being successful isn’t always easy.

- Barker

Walking the dog, Brandon Flinders sees flashlights in the sky. They seem to be moving towards an unknown, but nearby airstrip. Flinders wonders what’s going on. Smugglers...aliens? He tries to find out, following the lights in the middle of the night. What will he find?

- Gifted

Predicting the future. Isn’t it something we all want? But, does foreseeing the future also mean you can change it?

- Man on a Mission

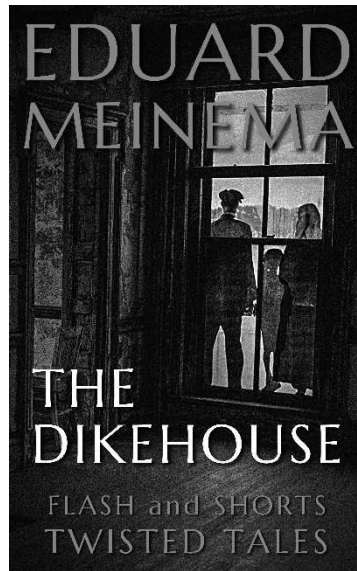
The daily routine of a patrol in the outskirts of the universe is rudely disturbed by an unexpected event. How will the crew cope with this threatening interruption? How will they face the unknown?

- Quadrennial

When Leap Day turns into a once in a lifetime experience...

Are you ready for the unexpected? Start reading!

1. The Dikehouse



The Woldring family is ready to move into a beautiful house on a dike. An old building in the middle of the Dutch fruit production county 'The Betuwe' where the Woldrings expect to escape the bustle of the citylife. The removal does not run as smooth as planned. Calamity and an unexpected, bizarre discovery are waiting behind the doors of the Woldrings' new house. The troublesome circumstances soon show that the family ties are not as tight as thought. A removal with unpleasant consequences that no one could imagine...

1.1

“It’s really the same house,” Anthony Woldring says as he convulsively clamps one of the boxes in his arms.

The chill wind whistles piercing along the dike and rubs along the veins in their faces.

“Well, when we first saw it, it seemed more fun,” Tony calls. The oldest of the two children pulls his cap even further over his throbbing ears.

His younger sister giggles. “You look like a Teletubbie,” Jeany laughs.

“Come on guys, what did you expect?” Leah says, shivering from the cold. “The first time we saw the house was in spring; all fruit trees were in bloom, right honey?” Disappointed and as inconspicuous as possible Leah looks at her husband. This is not the time to say it out loud, but frankly she also had a very different image of the house in her mind. The last time they had seen their new house, the fruit trees still wore white blossoms; now the wind is building snowdrifts. Gloomy she looks at the white landscape around the old dike; their new home. The dike suddenly seems much higher. The entrance is at the very top; the house and garden a story below, at the bottom of the dike. “We’ll make the best of it!” she cries almost cheerful and resolutely steps inside.

“Beware!” Anthony shouts.

“Mom!” Jeany screams.

Anthony Woldring frightens and drops the box from his hands. The clatter reveals what is in the box. Or was; after the

fall there is not much left of the china. Before Anthony can do anything, his wife has disappeared into the gaping hole right behind the door.

“Lee?” he shouts, peering frightened into the deep, dark hole. “Holy shit, you’ve scared the hell out of me!”

“How do you think I feel?” Leah groans. “What idiot didn’t close the hatch?”

“Are you okay sweetie? Didn’t break anything did you?” Anthony asks worried. With his right hand he pushes Tony and Jeany away from the hole. “Get out of here!” he commands. “Get out of this narrow hallway!”

“Mom?” Jeany squeaks. “Are you still alive?”

“Duh-huh,” Tony says. “She just answered...”

“Come on guys, step aside,” Anthony says angrily. With his left hand he reaches out to Leah. “Come on honey, I pull you out of there.”

“I can’t reach your hand,” Leah moans.

“Yes,” Anthony mutters, “it is very deep for a crawl space. It almost looks like a basement. Can you move yourself dear?”

“My leg is feeling weird... I think it’s broken.”

“Sweet Jesus...”

“Watch your language Anthony. We now live in the “Bible Belt” remember?”

“Yeah, yeah...,” Anthony sighs. “Damned, this is really fucked up.”

“Anthony!”

“Sorry... but it’s still fucked.”

Leah shakes her head. “I think you should call 911 Ton. You can’t get me out of here all by yourself.”

“Damn.”

“Ton!”

“Come on, what else can I say? Hallelujah? Thank you, Lord?” Angry he paves his way through the snow; out of envy he kicks the box with the broken crockery, picks up his cell phone which he had stored in the glove compartment of the removal van and calls the emergency services. Nearly twenty minutes later a bright yellow ambulance slowly glides through the snow to the house on the dike.

1.2

“Good thing my wife did not have a heart attack,” Anthony says. The two paramedics don’t miss the sarcastic tone. From experience, they know what to do and do not respond.

“Where is the victim?” the tallest man of the two men asks.

“On the couch, enjoying a cup of tea... I already told you that she has fallen into the crawl space, didn’t I?” Anthony says annoyed.

The small, corpulent brother takes the initiative. Wiggles himself into the narrow corridor and bends over the gaping hole. “Are you alright ma’am?”

Leah mutter-moans something unintelligible.

“Sorry?”

“I want out!” Leah screams as loud as she can. “I’ve been down here for almost half an hour...”

“I know ma’am. Sorry for that. Because of the snow we are very busy. But don’t you worry we will get you out.” Quickly he turns to his colleague and softly speaks: “This isn’t going to work Jeremy. I just don’t fit in there.”

“No, that’s obvious,” Anthony says hateful.

“What is obvious Ton?” Leah asks.

“Nothing, we are discussing the plan honey.”

“Enough,” Jeremy says and sends Anthony out. Then he bends over the hole. “Um... Ma’am; the crawl space is deeper than we thought. And quite narrow too. I’m afraid we must call the fire department for help.”

“Oh,” Leah reacts offended. “I’m not a fucking cow that fell into a ditch.”

“Mind your language sweetie,” Anthony says delicately from the doorway.

“You call the fire department Peter,” Jeremy tells his fellow paramedic. “I will have a closer look on the lady’s condition.” Jeremy lies down on his belly and stretches out in the hallway. He grabs a flashlight from his pocket and shines in the crawl space. Slowly he moves the light over Leah. “Except for a few scrapes, and your broken your leg, I see nothing unusual ma’am. We will wait for our colleagues. Would you like something to drink?”

“A little water would be fine. Are the children with my husband?”

“I didn’t see any children,” Jeremy says. “If you wait here, I grab a bottle of water and ask your husband about the children.”

“If you wait here...,” Leah mutters cranky. “If I could jump out myself, I had done just that you moron...”

*

“Mister Woldring,” Jeremy says as he pulls a bottle of water from his lunch box,” your wife asks about the kids.”

Startled Anthony looks around. “Oh fuck! Goddam... Excuse me...”

Grinning Jeremy runs back. “It’s a good thing I am not a member of the church, eh sir?”

“Sorry,” Anthony mutters while he passes. “Don’t tell her anything... or, um... tell her I’m in the kitchen to get them a drink.”

“I hear you loud and clear Anthony Woldring!” Leah’s reared voice echoes from the crawl space.

“I’ll be right back,” Anthony squeaks. “They’re probably playing down at the basement or in the garden.” Hurried he walks away, stumbling over the box with the broken crockery. “Dammit...”

Jeremy chuckles when he gives Leah the water. “It will be alright. Nothing ever happens here.”

“Well, if you call this nothing,” Leah says while she, not visible to Jeremy, points at her leg in the dark.

1.3

“Tony! Jeany!” Anthony Woldring screams so loud, his lungs hurt. Where did those kids go?

“Here, daddy!” Jeany calls almost crying. “At the bench.”

Anthony follows the sound of his daughter’s voice. Then he sees his children standing at the edge of the garden. Next to a bench with a snowman. “Wow, you have made that one quick. And it’s made so beautiful.”

“We have not made it dad, he was already there,” Tony says anxious.

“He seems really... What did you say? He was there already?” Anthony reacts surprised. “How on earth is that possible? This garden is closed; no one can come in here. You can only enter this garden through the house.”

Tony doesn’t say anything. He points a trembling finger at the neck of the snowman.

“What?” Anthony says while he walks around the snowman. “What... Dammit, what is that? It looks like blood.” Carefully he touches the white man. The snowman tumbles forward by the imbalance and rolls off the bench. The loose snow falls apart and exposes the body of a dead man.

“Daddyyyy!” Jeany screams. Quickly she hides in the arms of her father while Tony clings to his father’s leg.

Anthony recoils. “Come on. Get out of here,” he says shocked. Together they run back upstairs, through the twilight. With a white face Anthony hurries to the paramedics.

“My oh my, sir, you really do have respect for your wife,” Jeremy laughs.

“He’s dead,” Anthony pants.

“What?” Leah calls anxious. “Did something happen to Tony?”

“Nothing wrong sweetie. The children are here.” Anthony pushes Jeany and Tony to the hole. “Have a look. They will stay here with you.” Quickly he turns back to Jeremy: “There’s a fucking corpse in my garden!” he hisses.

Suddenly he hears a smacking noise coming from the pantry. A thick, fatty monster struggles himself into the narrow corridor. “Are you sure?” Peter asks, while eating a candy bar.

“Yes, I’m sure. And if you continue to feed yourself like that you will die too.”

“Hey, hey ...”

“Easy, easy,” Jeremy soothes. “We’re going to have a look. You wait here. The fire brigade may arrive any minute now.”

Grumbling Peter follows his colleague into the garden.

“What kind of bizarre story is that Ton? Is it true what the kids say? Is there a body in our garden?”

“So it seems sweetie.”

“What do you mean ‘So it seems’? What else can it be? A wax figure which has escaped from Madame Tussauds?”

“Well, no, but I have not felt or... Fuck, maybe the man is still alive.”

“Jesus Ton, get me out of here. I don’t want to be stuck down here for another minute.”

“We must wait for the fire brigade Lee. Just hold on a second.” He looks at his watch. Not a sound of any siren; only the whistling of the wind. “They do take their time,” Ton sighs. He stiffens when he suddenly feels a hand on his shoulder.

“It’s the snow, sir,” Jeremy grins. “Everything is delayed.”

Anthony stores the hand from his shoulder. “Dammit man, you scared me to death!”

“Well, then we do have a corpse after all. The garden is clear.”

“What? That is impossible! I ... we ... we have seen it. My kids and I!”

“Sir, there is no dead man. Only a big snowman with something red in his neck. I think discolored leaves or bird droppings or something.”

“Sure, now you think I’m crazy... I’ve seen it myself!” Angry Anthony returns to the garden. “Nobody’s driving me insane...,” he grumbles as he runs down the stairs.

Gnashing the garden door swishes open. Involuntarily Ton looks at his watch. Hmm, it gets dark early. At the back of the garden lies the heap of snow in the form of a lifeless body. Carefully Anthony walks closer. He bites his cold lips. It does seem a real body. And the red spot... along the way he picks up a stick from the snowy garden. With bated breath he ports the pole in the body of snow. The stick slips further and further into

the snow. Totally no resistance; nothing underneath. No body. Nothing but snow. Anthony looks at the bench. The empty spot on the bench keeps its silence as an unwilling silent witness. “Yet there really was a life-size snowman,” Anthony mumbles. In his mind he relives the moment. His hands move in the air as if they can touch the picture in his mind for real. When the lifeless white substance slips down the bench again, he recoils. Yes, yes, that was it! The snowman fell from the bench and the corpse appeared. The body of an old man with blood in his neck. Anthony stares at the red color in the virgin snow. “Bird droppings or so... Ha! I’m not crazy!”

When he suddenly feels something cold in his neck, Anthony shrinks. The howling wind blew a pack of snow from the branches of an old tree. Wriggling and dripping, the snow crawls painfully slow over his shoulder to his back. Shivering Anthony sweeps the snow away. Meanwhile, he stares at the ground. There was a body. A dead body. Anthony was sure about it now. But where did it go? Some traces remained in the snow, but those were from the paramedics and his children. Incredulous, he stares into the white void. How quiet it is down here. Very quiet; almost frightening. He looks at the old house on the dike which by now is almost one with its snowy environment. It is dark inside, no light that illuminates the darkness of night. Carefully he listens if he can hear Leah or the children. Nothing but silence. His eyes wander lonely along the white dike. What’s keeping those firemen?