



# Funhouse

*Robert Vaughan*

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Brilliantly slippery pieces of flash fiction and longer form prose from the author of Addicts & Basements, and Rift (with Kathy Fish), among others. Robert Vaughan is unrivaled in his ability to surprise, stimulate and explore. A magician with a typewriter. He returns here with stories to hypnotize in the tunnel of love, beguile in the hall of wonders, spin you around on the tilt o' whirl.

## Funhouse Details

Date : Published February 2nd 2017 by Unknown Press

ISBN : 9780998309019

Author : Robert Vaughan

Format : Paperback 260 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Poetry, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Funhouse for online ebook

### Meg Tuite says

Vaughan is brilliant!! The structure, the genre-mix of poetry, poetic prose, flash, and longer stories are all rocking through the 'Funhouse'! A review to come. Get a copy! Excellent!

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### Meredith Alling says

Brilliant, funny, and beautiful. Robert Vaughan's voice is one of a kind, and this collection of shorts, shorties, poems, and genre-bendy pieces is a gift in that the reader gets so much Vaughan in one place. A must for any lover of short fiction and any lover of the weird and wonderful in life.

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### Kathy says

If there's a more inventive, risk-taking, playful writer than Robert Vaughan, I've not met him/her. Funhouse is a great title for this genre-bending collection of what is arguably his best work to date. A delicious, surprising blend of poetry, micro, and the downright unclassifiable, this is a book to keep close to your bedside and just dip into from time to time. Author Len Kuntz describes the experience of reading Funhouse thusly: "Your knees will quake." Yes. What a ride. I highly recommend this latest by Robert Vaughan.

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### Jennifer Rupp says

In his latest collection titled Funhouse, Robert Vaughan is at play with form, memory, irony, emotion, and my head. Just like the name implies, Vaughan takes reality, stretches it, amplifies it, turns it on its head just for the fun of it. Hilarious, tragic, sometimes weird, always memorable, Vaughan has collected something for everyone (and then some).

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### David says

Vaughan knows people like no one else. He gets in their heads like no one else, and gets the reader in there too. Intensely real. Vaughan can make you laugh or break your heart, but his best moments are when you think he's going to do one and instead he does the other. Marvelous stories, and a few things in here that expanded what I thought Vaughan could do. All really good stuff.

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### Len Kuntz says

FUNHOUSE is one the best books of 2017, and certainly the best story collection of the year. The language dazzles and makes you sit up and take notice:

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-Here's what the moon shows me: you're still a liar. --Last sentence in The Graffiti Maze

-My whole life [is] a preparation for this orbit. --From Liminal

-It worked so well, my face fell off. --From Party Like An Animal

-Dad wants his own bench. My feelings aren't hurt, just who he is—the way any visitor from outer space might feel. --From The 5% Nation of Pay-Per-View

-You think I'm funny? I think I'm depressing. --From The Message From Ruben

-His smile seemed to come from inside his eyes. --From Dinah Won't You Blow

-There are some things that haunt you. --From Our Breakfast

And notice the titles—Vaughan use evocative ones for every piece, as well as story starts that sometimes reel you in and other times grab your collar and yank you in.

Like the best poetry which makes the reader pause and contemplate what they've just read, these stories demand study and patience in order to absorb the layers and textures they have to offer.

Vaughan gives us something of everything—pathos, humor, self-inspection, meditations on life, wry wit, gorgeous descriptions and clever word play to name just a few.

Some books are read and then tossed on a shelf, left to collect dust. FUNHOUSE certainly isn't one of those. You'll return to it again and again as I have. I guarantee it.

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## Sara says

Five stars on sheer invention alone. Refreshing and irreverent, this book abounds with short-shorts, form-defying songstress poetry, as well as longer stories ("Dana Hill" is a beautiful, nuanced gem), showcasing Vaughan's signature voice and impressive range. FUNHOUSE is electric and alive and full of heart and pain, crackling dialogue, humor and playfulness. A tremendous risk taker, Vaughan's risks pay off again and again. His fearlessness inspires. (Literally: One peek at his magnificent Hall of Mirrors section inspired my daughter's own illustrated abecedarian riff called The Scary Old Sneak of Kids) Robert Vaughan has no fucks for convention. What a gift it was to receive his latest -- a gift I'll return to, to energize my own practice, to scour for prompts, to remember the exuberance, the wildness, the joy.

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## Mark Kerstetter says

Robert Vaughan's many gifts—gifts of form and tone—are on display in "Funhouse". We have short and short-short stories, along with sketches and poetry ranging in tone from funny to poignant to frightening, with many emotional points between. Vaughan is a master of concision. The short-shorts are gems. Poems or stories, call them whatever you like. They work as narratives but their construction will be the envy of poets everywhere. The longer stories feel much larger, seeming to suggest entire worlds behind the slices we're given. Individual lines sparkle with poetry and wit. The section entitled "Divas" is made up of segments

headed by the names and birthdates of female pop stars followed by a quote from one of their songs. One notices recurring phrases from segment to segment and suspects a wider narrative might be taking place. I made a mental note to go back later and copy them down. When I got to the notes at the end of the book and learned that at least some of the phrases were the result of a semi-random process I was less inclined to look for an intentional narrative. But the whole sequence didn't cease to astonish me, still demonstrating that language can sometimes exhibit an almost plastic quality normally associated with the visual arts. Any technique that can encourage one to read more carefully or in a unique way is most welcome—and rare to pull off successfully, in my opinion. The beautiful beads that make up the “Divas” necklace shine like jewels, just as the women they are dedicated to do. This is a fun, beautiful, multi-faceted book.

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## Joseph says

Funhouse by Robert Vaughan is a categorized collection of short fiction and poetry. Vaughan is the author of five poetry, fiction, and cross-genre writing books. His writing has appeared in over 500 print and online journals, and over ten anthologies including *The Best Small Fictions 2106*. He leads writing roundtables at Red Oak Writing in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And, he teaches workshops at locations like Mabel Dodge Luhan House in Taos, NM, The Clearing in Door County, Wisconsin and Synergia Ranch outside of Santa Fe, NM.

I first came across Vaughan's work in 2014 when I was writing reviews for Author Alliance. I also reviewed his joint work with Kathy Fish, titled *Rift*, in 2015. This collection uses the carnival to group his writings. Funhouse, like much of his writing, presents something on a happy, fun setting but, has something a little darker lurking under the surface. The reader may not always see it, but he or she will feel it hiding on the next page.

Vaughan has also mastered the role of the narrator. Usually, the reader can hear the voice of a narrator, male, female, masculine, feminine, strong or weak. Funhouse reads like it was written by a dozen different writers. The reader is left guessing the narrator's gender. It is not that it matters so much in life but, that the reader is caught in a game guessing and wondering when no description is given. It presents a nice twist and lets the reader take the hook. In 2014, I wrote this about Vaughan's poetry collection *Addicts and Basements*:

The writer, however, is an artist not a gender, or as Patti Smith put it: When I'm writing a poem or drawing, I am not female; I'm an artist. Perhaps, it is one step further than that as Smith also says: “All gender is a drag.”

Vaughan, in his writing, is a true artist.

The section, "Balloon Darts", starts with youthful stories, but with a hint of darkness and a bit of an uncomfortable feeling that is later confirmed in "The Day My Life Changed." There is a slight touch of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* in the writing with the cover of the book giving that first hint. The second section, "The House of Mirrors", present twenty-six character sketches of children, or childlike characters, with each name starting with a different letter, A through Z. These short descriptions show more of the inside than the visible outside of the person. Bob Schofield presents a supporting illustration for each.

"Tunnel of Love" departs into poetry. Thirty-six poems, line art, and even a flowchart connect different female singers. A singer, year of birth, and a lyric set off a stylized poem or word experiment. I was happy to see Patti Smith and Rickie Lee Jones included in the collection and the range of women singers cover decades. The final section, "Ferris Wheel", is a collection of longer fictions. I was "Don Ho's Ho" is

delightful. The play on words and yes, a man's addiction to Ho-Hos make this an entertaining story. "Jesus Votives" perhaps ties much of the author's work together. This is the story that lacks a dark underside and expands the fluidity of the author's writing. It is the top shelf prize on the midway.

Funhouse is a collection I devoured. Vaughan's style is unique and his role as a narrator transcends the usual singular voice. The reading is enjoyable and the reader is challenged to discover the voice telling the story. The short fictions are also complete stories and the reader never gets the feeling of jumping into the middle of a story and being pulled out before its end. A nicely crafted collection of precisely written literature which will lead the way in popularizing short fiction.

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### **Emily Bertholf says**

If the cost of admission for this poetry and prose collection was a ticket, you'll want to buy a wristband so you could ride it again and again. This is the best of Robert Vaughan to date. No one brings the peripheral of life to focus in such a convincing, daring, tender way as Vaughan. One half Tunnel of Love, one half Hall of Mirrors, one hundred and fifty percent adventurous - this is a collection you don't want to miss.

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### **Robert Vaughan says**

It's my party and I'll cry if I want to.

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### **Scott Waldyn says**

Robert Vaughan is one of my favorite storytellers. The way he's able to paint pictures with such beautiful prose is nothing short of breathtaking.

In this collection, we get a wonderful blend of flash fiction, longer short stories, and poems. Like its title implies, you get a bit of everything in a way that only the author can conjure.

It's magic and meditative.

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### **John Madera says**

Enter *Funhouse*: a multi-tiered, many-roomed dwelling sheltering jeweled mosaics of short fictions; a wistful illustrated abecedary for adults; a collection of highly textured poems responding to signature sung lines from a pantheon of divas, including Aretha, Billie, Ella, Janis; your host, Robert Vaughan, offering evocative portraits of innumerable strange, sad, anxious people on the verge of madness and sadness, their urges, yearnings, failures, quirks, and kinks empathetically and commandingly drawn.

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