



BOOK CLUB
RESOURCE GUIDE

MULTI-AUTHOR
ANTHOLOGY



THANK YOU FOR
CONSIDERING THE PERFECT
MATCH AND OTHER SMALL
BITES STORIES FOR YOUR
NEXT BOOK CLUB READ

BOOK CLUB
RESOURCE GUIDE

SMALL BITES SHORT
STORY WINNERS

The Perfect Match and Other Small Bites Stories, is a captivating collection that spans across genres and eras. Explore speculative futures where technology blurs the lines of privacy and connection, journey back to the heart of the Civil War with time-traveling guardians, and confront the darkness lurking within the human psyche in chilling psychological thrillers. From the ethereal blend of reality and magic to the poignant struggles of coming-of-age, these tales offer a diverse tapestry of human experience. Discover worlds both familiar and fantastical, where love, loss, and the search for meaning intertwine in unexpected ways. This anthology is a testament to the power of storytelling, inviting you to savor each bite-sized narrative and leave you craving more.

WORD COUNT: 35,840

PAGE COUNT: 186

KEY WORDS: Anthology | Multi-Author Anthology | Short Stories

DEMOGRAPHICS: Technology and Society Readers | Social Issues Readers

COMP BOOKS: Stories of Your Life and Others by Ted Chiang | Her Body and Other

Parties by Carmen Maria Machado | Nine Stories by J.D. Salinger

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Concept

Since the book is an anthology of short stories, the party can be a celebration of variety and quick, engaging reads.

Decorations:

- **Miniature Theme:** Use miniature decorations to reflect the small bites concept. Think tiny food replicas, small book displays, and mini fairy lights.
- **Story-Themed Sections:** Dedicate different corners of the party area to different stories from the book. Use relevant props, colors, and decorations to represent each story's theme or genre.

Activities:

- **Short Story Discussion:** Discuss your favorite stories from the book, focusing on the themes, characters, and writing styles.
- **Blind Date with a Book:** Wrap books in brown paper and write a few keywords on the outside. Have guests choose a book based on the keywords, and then discuss their blind date.
- **Character Costume Party:** Encourage guests to dress up as their favorite characters from the book.
- **Small Bites Writing Exercise:** Have guests write a short story or poem inspired by one of the stories in the book. Share and discuss the creations.
- **Themed Music:** Play music that fits the themes of the stories, such as science fiction soundtracks, historical music, or romantic ballads.

THEMED PARTY - Small Bites, Big Stories

Additional Touches:

- **Personalized Bookmarks:** Create personalized bookmarks for each guest with a quote from the book or a character's name.
- **Perfect Match Game:** Create a fun matching game where guests have to pair characters from the book with their corresponding stories or traits.
- **Dating App Theme:** Since the first story is about a dating app, you could incorporate elements of dating apps into the party, such as creating profile cards for guests or having a matchmaking activity.

Dinner Discussion Prompts:

- How did the theme of technology and privacy in *The Perfect Match* resonate with you?
- Which story challenged your perspective on a particular issue or genre?
- What are your thoughts on the blend of science fiction and historical fiction in *Perennial Guardians*?
- How did the authors use small bites to convey larger themes and ideas?
- Which character did you find most compelling, and why?
- How did the anthology format enhance or detract from your overall reading experience?

THEMED PARTY

This menu focuses on small, flavorful dishes that encourage conversation and reflection on the diverse themes in the anthology.

Appetizers (Small Bites):

Data-Tracking Tapas:

- Recipe: Mini skewers with cherry tomatoes, mozzarella balls, and basil leaves, drizzled with balsamic glaze.
- Thematic Connection: Reflects the constant data tracking in *The Perfect Match*.

Historical Conflict Crostini:

- Recipe: Toasted baguette slices topped with a white bean spread, roasted red peppers, and a sprinkle of smoked paprika.
- Thematic Connection: Inspired by the historical fiction elements in *Perennial Guardians*.

Magical Realism Mini Quiches:

- Recipe: Bite-sized quiches with a variety of fillings (e.g., spinach and feta, mushroom and Gruyere).
- Thematic Connection: A nod to the magical realism in *There Was an Old Woman Who Thought She Was Dead*.

THEMED MENU - Small Bites, Big Ideas

Main Course (Big Ideas):

Perfect Match Paella:

- **Recipe:** A seafood paella with a mix of shrimp, mussels, clams, and chorizo, symbolizing the search for connection.
- **Thematic Connection:** Represents the central theme of finding a perfect match in the digital age.

Dessert:

- **From Darkness into Light Chocolate Lava Cakes:**
- **Recipe:** Individual chocolate lava cakes with a molten chocolate center, served with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.
- **Thematic Connection:** Symbolizes the journey from darkness to light, inspired by the story of the same name.

Drinks:

- **Perennial Guardians Punch:**
- **Recipe:** A refreshing punch with cranberry juice, ginger ale, and lime slices, garnished with rosemary sprigs.
- **Thematic Connection:** A nod to the historical setting of the story.

THEMED MENU - Small Bites, Big Ideas



This cocktail aims to capture the feeling of a connection that's both alluring and potentially flawed, mirroring the themes of technology and relationships explored in the book. The layers of flavor represent the complexity of human interaction in a digital age.

Ingredients:

- 1.5 oz Gin (Represents the clean, modern feel of technology)
- 0.75 oz Blackberry Liqueur (For the dark, mysterious side of data and privacy)
- 0.5 oz Fresh Lemon Juice (Adds a sour note, representing the potential for things to go wrong)
- 0.5 oz Simple Syrup (Sweetness for the allure of connection)
- 2 oz Sparkling Wine or Prosecco (For the celebratory, bubbly feeling of finding a match)
- 2 Dashes of Orange Bitters (Adds complexity and a hint of bitterness)
- Garnish: Edible glitter (to represent the digital world), a lemon twist (for a touch of reality)

Instructions:

- Chill: Chill a coupe or martini glass.
- Shake: In a shaker with ice, combine the gin, blackberry liqueur, lemon juice, simple syrup, and orange bitters. Shake well until chilled.
- Strain: Strain the mixture into the chilled glass.
- Top: Top with sparkling wine or Prosecco.
- Garnish: Sprinkle a pinch of edible glitter on top and add a lemon **twist**.

SIGNATURE DRINK - The Glitched Connection Cocktail

- Mad World by Tears for Fears
- Fortunate Son by Creedence Clearwater Revival
- Space Oddity by David Bowie
- Rhiannon by Fleetwood Mac
- Hallelujah by Leonard Cohen
- Landslide by Fleetwood Mac
- The Sound of Silence by Simon & Garfunkel
- Yesterday by The Beatles
- Time by Pink Floyd
- Stairway to Heaven by Led Zeppelin
- Born to Run by Bruce Springsteen
- All Along the Watchtower by Jimi Hendrix
- Paranoid Android by Radiohead
- A Sky Full of Stars by Coldplay
- Imagine by John Lennon



SPOTIFY MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS

A watercolor illustration of a cozy living room. In the center, a wooden chair with a curved back sits on a light-colored rug. To the left and right are tall wooden bookshelves filled with books. A small table with a plant on it is visible behind the chair. The overall style is soft and artistic, with a warm, inviting atmosphere.

THIS GUIDE CONTAINS POSSIBLE
SPOILERS FOR THIS BOOK IN
THE DISCUSSION SECTION.

WARNING

General Discussion Points (Applicable to Multiple Stories):

- **Themes:** What recurring themes do you notice across the stories in this collection? (e.g., technology, relationships, identity, loss, societal critique, etc.)
- **Genre Blending:** How do the authors blend different genres within their short stories? (e.g., science fiction with historical fiction, psychological thriller with magical realism)
- **Writing Style:** Did you find the writing style of the different authors to be engaging? Which stories had the most compelling prose?
- **Character Development:** Which stories featured the most memorable or well-developed characters?
- **Pacing and Structure:** How did the short story format affect the pacing and structure of each narrative? Did any stories feel rushed or incomplete?
- **Overall Impact:** Which stories resonated with you the most, and why? Which stories did you find the least engaging?
- **Authorial Intent:** What do you think the authors were trying to convey with their stories? What messages or warnings are present?
- **Personal Connection:** Did any of the stories remind you of your own experiences or concerns?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Specific Discussion Questions for Each Story:

1. The Perfect Match (Robert Plant)

- How does the story use the science fiction genre to explore the potential dangers of technology in relationships?
- What is the significance of the story's title, The Perfect Match, in relation to the themes of technology, privacy, and relationships?
- Is the greater good justification morally acceptable?
- How does the story challenge our understanding of consent and autonomy?

2. Perennial Guardians (Scott Meehan)

- How does the story blend science fiction with historical fiction?
- What are the ethical implications of altering historical events, even to prevent a negative future?
- Discuss the characters of Commander Henson, Major Hawkins, and Cyrix. What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- What is the significance of the story's setting during the American Civil War?
- How does the story explore themes of duty, sacrifice, and the weight of history?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

3. Albert (Donald Firesmith)

- How does the story explore the nature of love and consciousness in artificial intelligence?
- What are the ethical implications of creating robots with the capacity for love and emotion?
- Discuss the ending of the story. Was Albert truly a ghost, or was his consciousness somehow transferred to the smart home's computer?
- How does the story blend science fiction with paranormal elements?
- What is the significance of the story's setting in an elder care robot's world?

4. The Adventure (Michael Nelson)

- How does the story capture the sense of wonder and excitement of childhood adventures?
- What is the significance of the story's setting on Madeline Island and Lake Superior?
- Discuss the relationship between Annie and her father. What does their adventure reveal about their bond?
- How does the story explore themes of nature, exploration, and family?
- What is the significance of the story's ending, with Annie seeing the lights of Chequamegon Point and LaPoint lighthouse?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

5. The First Three Springsteen Albums (D. Krauss)

- How does the story capture the atmosphere and culture of the 1970s?
- What is the significance of the story's title in relation to the themes of coming of age and identity?
- Discuss the characters of Dale, Don, and Drew. What are their individual struggles and aspirations?
- How does the story explore themes of friendship, loyalty, and the challenges of adulthood?
- What is the significance of the story's ending, with Dale leaving for the Air Force?

6. From Darkness into Light (Ed DeJesus)

- How does the story capture the atmosphere and culture of Lowell, Massachusetts, in the 1960s?
- What is the significance of the story's title in relation to the themes of blindness, resilience, and hope?
- Discuss the relationship between Eddie and George. What does their friendship reveal about their characters?
- How does the story explore themes of community, compassion, and the power of human connection?
- What is the significance of the story's ending, with Eddie reflecting on his experience with George?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. The Outside Clan (Lisa Towles)

- How does the story capture the atmosphere and culture of rural Wyoming in the 1950s and 1960s?
- What is the significance of the story's title in relation to the themes of family, secrets, and belonging?
- Discuss the characters of Charmaine, Shelby, Cleo, and Mama. What are their individual struggles and aspirations?
- How does the story explore themes of trauma, loss, and the search for identity?
- What is the significance of the story's ending, with Charmaine finding Marcus on the island of Aegina?

8. Blood at the Window (Timothy Baldwin)

- How does the story explore themes of harassment, power dynamics, and workplace culture?
- What is the significance of the story's title in relation to the themes of violence, revenge, and justice?
- Discuss the characters of Dwayne, Sarah, and Chris. What are their individual motivations and struggles?
- How does the story use suspense and thriller elements to create tension and intrigue?
- What is the significance of the story's ending, with Chris being hailed as a hero and potentially starting a relationship with Sarah?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

9. There Was an Old Woman Who Thought She Was Dead (Donna Doty)

- How does the story blend magical realism with themes of mortality, identity, and acceptance?
- What is the significance of the old woman's search for her body?
- Discuss the symbolism of the roses and the other elements of the story's setting.
- How does the story explore themes of memory, loss, and the afterlife?
- What is the significance of the story's ending, with the old woman being taken away with the trash?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ROBERT PLANT

Robert Plant self-published his debut novel, *Heartstrings*, in 2023 and has a knack for stirring the soul in his fiction writing. After releasing this family drama to the world, Robert pivoted to writing in the Sci-Fi genre. He's finalizing his next book, *Dark Matter*, to be released in the summer of 2025, which will be an anthology of short stories that will challenge our existence in this small sliver of the cosmos. These short stories are created with a likeness to *The Twilight Zone* and *Black Mirror* shows and will have you on the edge of your seat until the final twist.

SCOTT MEEHAN

Scott A. Meehan is a retired Army veteran, middle school history teacher, and award-winning author. He is a Bronze Star recipient from actions in Iraq and is known for his storytelling based on his worldwide experiences as a missionary kid and Army veteran. Meehan writes multi-cultural themes that focus on current events in the form of thrillers, suspense, romance, and military. He has a BA in Secondary Education-Social Sciences, MA in Computer Resource Information Management, and an MBA. In 2024, Scott won first place in the Orlando Veteran's Creative Arts Awards contest with his creative short story, *CH-47A Chinooks: Guardians of the Sky*.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DONALD FIRESMITH

Donald Firesmith is a multi-award-winning author of speculative fiction, including science fiction, fantasy, paranormal horror, and modern urban paranormal novels and collections of short stories. Because of his strong background in software/system engineering and science, his science fiction is well-researched, and he relies on numerous science, technology, and military technical advisors to ensure that the non-speculative aspects of his stories are realistic and believable.

MICHAEL NELSON

Michael Nelson is a former small-town physician, living in a small community among the deep hills and valleys of Southwestern Wisconsin. Retired now, he indulges in his many hobbies. Woodworking, and travel to various parts of the country but most of all; writing. Always being open to new things has kept him youthful and vital as he tries to keep up with his young daughter, Isabelle Drawing upon their adventures together, in this most recent endeavor, he and his daughter, Isabelle have taken a lighter approach to exciting adventure and magic.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

D. KRAUSS

D. Krauss resides in the Shenandoah Valley, Virginia. He has been a cottonpicker, a sodbuster, a librarian, a surgical orderly, the guy who paints the little white line down the middle of the road, a weatherman, a door-kickin' shove-gun-in-face lawman, a hunter of terrorists, and a school bus driver. Currently, he's a layabout. He's been married over 45 years (yep, same woman), and has a wildman bass guitarist for a son.

ED DEJESUS

Ed DeJesus (pronounced D Geezus) joined Indies United in January 2025. His thriller novel, *The Vulnerable*, debuted in April. His short story offers a glimpse into his forthcoming memoir collection, *Simpler Times in The Spindle City*. A technopreneur, he was President of Sightline Solar, CEO of JustZip.com, and VP of Engineering for MSL. Previously, his software work at Digital Equipment Corp was published in the Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Design Automation journals. He served in the US Army Reserves and opened a record store with his wife in the vinyl era. He resides in Florida and is a Gulf Coast Writers Association member. When Ed's not immersed in his writing, he finds joy in reading, dancing, singing Karaoke, and traveling the world with his wife and children.

LISA TOWLES

Lisa Towles is an award-winning crime novelist and a passionate speaker on the topics of fiction writing, creativity, and self care. She has thirteen crime thrillers in print with a new thriller, *Switch*, due for release in 2025. Her E&A Series titles *Hot House* and *Salt Island* were both Amazon Kindle #1 Bestsellers. Lisa is a member of Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and International Thriller Writers. Deeply committed to supporting other writers, she hosts a YouTube series called *Story Impact*, where she interviews authors about the meaning and impact of their books. Lisa has an MBA in IT Management and works full-time in the tech industry in the San Francisco Bay area.

TIMOTHY BALDWIN

Timothy Baldwin grew up in Syracuse, New York. He currently resides in Maryland where he teaches English, Creative Writing, Film, and Theatre on the middle school level. At the insistence of his own students, he began writing seriously in 2014. He credits his love for story to his mother, who spent countless hours reading to him and his siblings when they were growing up. Growing up, he devoured the literary words of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Piers Anthony, and many others. Mysteries, thrillers, and fantasies are among the genre he most frequently reads. When he's not writing, he's reading, teaching, camping, or enjoying a live music concert.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



DONNA DOTY

Donna L. Doty, Ph.D. is a New York-based Sociologist, content creator, and 2D animator who writes and produces her own animations series, *Coffee with Katrin*. Most recently, Donna wrote a work of speculative fiction called *The Rule of Thoughts: A Fictional Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*—which received a Certificate of Appreciation from the International Fiction Festival in 2024 for being ranked in the top 10% in the Novel category among 850 authors from 48 countries. Donna also wrote several short stories including *There Was an Old Woman Who Thought She Was Dead*, *The Day We Saw a Giraffe in Our Yard*, and *The Red Spot*. She is currently working on a short story series.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

WEBSITE: <https://www.indiesunited.net/2025-small-bites-winners>

BOOK PAGE: <https://www.indiesunited.net/the-perfect-match>

SMALL BITES CONTEST PAGE: <https://www.indiesunited.net/small-bites>