

## *The Last Story*

*John Boyne*

A year ago, I set myself a challenge to write a 500 word story every week for *The Sunday Tribune* and this Sunday, with the publication of the 50<sup>th</sup> story, the series draws to a close. Hopefully you, the reader, will be saying *Oh no!* But I, the writer, have to admit that I feel a mixture of relief, pleasure and sorrow that the collection has come to an end.

I decided to stop at fifty for one simple reason: I've run out of ideas. (When I found myself narrating a story from the point of view of a dog a few weeks ago, I thought maybe it was time to say goodnight.) I knew from the start that it wouldn't be easy to write a new story every week. And some weeks were certainly more difficult than others. From time to time I'd get a rush of creativity and write rough drafts of two or three in a day and the pressure would be off. But some weeks I'd get to the morning of my deadline and still be struggling to come up with something interesting.

In the article that accompanied the first story, *Double*, I said "The point of each one is to reproduce a moment of life where something happens, something interesting, something funny, something sad, just *something*, and write it in such a way that it leaves the reader thinking about what they've read." I also suggested that you might love some of them, be unsure about others and hate a few but what I didn't expect was that looking back at all fifty stories I'd feel the same way. There's a few that I'm very pleased with (*Paradise, Bail, Friends*) and others (*Driving, Boniface, Hot*) that I'm not so sure about. Still, that's writing. You win some, you lose some. At least no one got to review them.

At events and festivals over the last year, I've been asked a lot of questions about these stories and it's been very gratifying to know that people have been interested in them and enjoyed reading them. I mentioned at a PEN reading a few weeks ago that the last story would be published in November and it was nice that people seemed to regret that, but it's better to go out when they're still reasonably fresh rather than carry on interminably.

So that's it. Time for me to go. All 50 stories, including longer stories published elsewhere, are available on my website, [www.johnboyne.com](http://www.johnboyne.com). Thanks for reading.

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