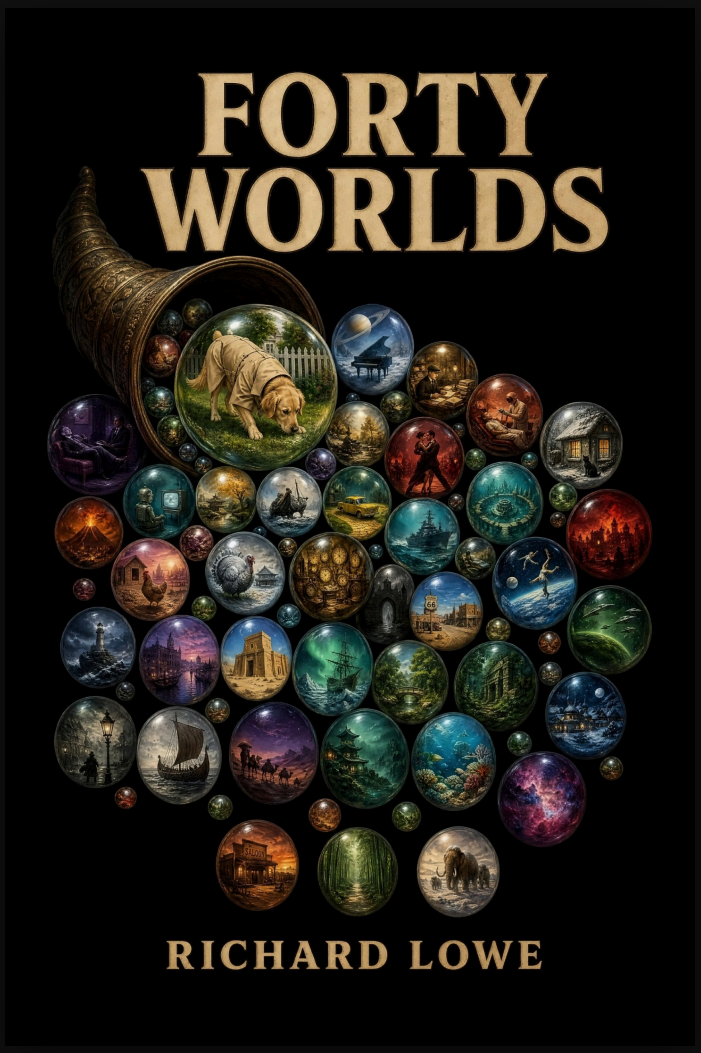
A FREE COMPANION TO FORTY WORLDS

Half an Inch

A rainmaker comes to a dried-out Kansas town, and the only rain gauge in the county belongs to a farm girl who keeps an honest book.



RICHARD LOWE

Half an Inch

The rainmaker's wagon came up the section road on a Tuesday, throwing a plume of dust that hung behind it for half a mile because there was no wind to take it anywhere. Ada Lindqvist saw it from the windmill platform, where she had climbed to grease the gears and stayed to look at the sky. The sky was the same as it had been for forty-one days, a white so pale it hurt the teeth.

The wagon had a tin sign wired to the side. She couldn't read it from the windmill, but she could see that it was red and that the letters were gold, and that the two mules pulling it were in better flesh than any animal in Ostrander County.

She climbed down and went inside and wrote the morning reading in her father's book, because it was nine o'clock and that was when the reading got written. Barometer 29.71, falling. Wind none, sky clear.

She had written falling twice that week already, and twice in July. It had never meant a thing.

* * *

His name was Tobias Quill, and by two in the afternoon he had most of the town standing in front of Dorrance's store listening to him explain the atmosphere.

He was a big man, fifty or more, with a white beard trimmed square at the bottom and a linen coat that had been white once and was now the color of weak coffee. He talked with his hands open. Ada saw that before anything else, because every man in Ostrander had been talking with his hands in his pockets since June.

"Rain is not a gift," Quill said. "Rain is a mechanism, and the water for it is above you now, three miles up, more than your Arkansas River carries in a year. It wants a reason to fall."

"And you've got the reason in that wagon," said Emmett Clay, who had lost forty head of cattle in July and had not been sober since.

"I have the reason in that wagon." Quill didn't smile when he said it. "Ten days to build my tower and do my work, and if half an inch falls on this county inside those ten days, you pay me one thousand dollars."

"And if it don't?"

"Then you pay me nothing. I leave, and you tell the next town I'm a fraud."

Somebody laughed. Somebody else said a thousand dollars was more money than the whole county had seen since the bank failed in Garden City.

Mrs. Dorrance stood in the door of her store with her arms crossed. She said the money could sit in Haskett's bank until the rain came, and then nobody would have to trust anybody. Mr. Haskett, at the back of the crowd in his gray vest, said the bank would be happy to hold it.

Ada stood by the hitching rail with her brother Per, who was eight and had stopped breathing when Quill said the word compounds. She was watching her father. Nils Lindqvist stood at the edge of the crowd with his hat in his hands, turning it, and his face had a look on it she had not seen since before her mother died.

"Who measures?" Mr. Haskett called out. "Rain on the Clay place and none on mine, does that count?"

"One gauge," Quill said. "One honest gauge, read by one honest person, and the whole county abides by it. Is there a gauge in this county?"

A silence went through the crowd. Then Mrs. Dorrance said, “Lindqvist has one. Him and the girl keep a book.”

Every face turned. Ada felt it land on her like heat off a stove door, and she put her hand on Per's shoulder so she would have somewhere to put it.

* * *

The subscription went around that evening on a sheet of Mrs. Dorrance's butcher paper. Ada watched it go from man to man on the store porch. She watched her father take the pencil, and she watched him write.

Forty dollars.

She knew where the forty dollars was. It was inside the case of the mantel clock, folded in a square of oilcloth behind the pendulum, and it was the seed money for next spring.

It was the last money. Her father had put it there in May. He had told her that whatever happened, that money did not come out of the clock.

On the walk home he whistled. The road was white in the moonlight, and the dust came up over their shoes and powdered their trouser legs, and he whistled a song her mother used to sing at the churn. Per ran ahead into the dark and came back and ran ahead again.

“Pappa.”

“Ja.”

“The man in eighty-seven. The one with the balloon.”

He stopped whistling. They walked a while with no sound but their shoes in the dust and a coyote somewhere down by the dry creek.

“That was a different man,” he said.

* * *

Quill camped at their windmill because it was the only water for six miles that hadn't gone to mud. The gauge stood thirty feet from it, on a cedar post her father had set the year she was born.

He paid them a dollar a day for the water. He paid in advance, ten silver dollars stacked on the kitchen table, and Ada's father looked at the stack a long time before he picked it up.

The tower went up in three days. It was a square frame of yellow pine, forty feet tall, with a ladder up one side and a shed at the top no bigger than a privy, roofed in tin. Quill hired Emmett Clay and the two Pruett boys to raise it and paid them in coin at the end of every day.

On the second morning Ada's father was out there with them, carrying lumber.

She hadn't seen him carry anything since February. Since the funeral he had sat on the porch in the mornings and on the porch in the evenings, and in between he had walked the dead wheat with his hands behind his back. When she asked him about the cow or the well or the note at the bank he said ja, ja, he would see to it.

Now he was forty feet in the air with a hammer and his shirt black with sweat. He was laughing at a thing one of the Pruetts said.

Per was beside himself. He carried nails in his hat and fetched water by the bucket. He asked Quill eleven questions an hour, and Quill answered every one.

“What's in the barrels?”

“Sulfuric acid. Zinc. Certain salts, and certain other things I don't name.”

“Why don't you name them?”

“Because then you'd be the rainmaker, and I'd be a fat old man sitting by your windmill.”

Per thought that was the funniest thing he had ever heard.

On the third evening, when the tower was done and the Pruett boys had gone home, Quill came to the kitchen door with his hat in his hand. He asked if he could see the book.

Ada had it on the table already. She had been copying the week's figures into a fair column the way her father had taught her, the pencil sharpened with his pocketknife, and she didn't get up. Quill stood in the doorway and waited, and after a moment her father said, “Show him,” from the other room.

She turned the book around and pushed it across the table.

He didn't sit. He stood over it and turned the pages slowly, back past July and June and into the spring, where the handwriting changed from hers to her father's, and back again into the year before.

He read the way a man reads a letter from home. Twice he ran his finger down a column and stopped.

“Who taught your father to keep this?”

“Nobody. He bought the glass in Topeka the year they came over. He says a farmer who doesn't know what the sky is doing is a farmer who's guessing.”

“He's right.” Quill closed the book and squared it on the table with both hands. “You read it at nine every morning?”

“And at three, and at nine at night.”

“Every day.”

“Every day since I was ten.”

He looked at her a moment longer than she liked. Then he thanked her and put his hat on and went back out to his wagon. That night the first smoke came out of the tower.

* * *

The smell got into everything. It was sulfur, the smell of a match struck under your nose, but there was vinegar in it too, and the smell of a nail left in a bucket of rainwater. It came down off the tower in a thin yellow haze and hung over the yard until morning.

The cow wouldn't go near the windmill. The hens stopped laying.

Ada lay awake in the loft and listened to Quill moving around in his tin shed. Glass clinked on glass, and once there was a low hiss like water dropped on a hot skillet.

Per slept with his mouth open beside her. Below, her father was snoring, and she lay listening to that too. It was the first full night he had slept since winter.

On the fourth night Quill came down the ladder a little before midnight and walked toward town. She watched him from the loft window, a big pale shape in the moonlight, until the road dipped and took him.

She was out of bed and down the loft ladder and across the yard with her feet bare in the dust, and then her hands were on the rungs. The pine was still warm from the day. Near the top the smell got so strong her eyes ran, and she had to hold on with one arm and wipe them with her sleeve.

The shed door had no lock. Inside were six wooden tubs with lids, an iron stove the size of a bread box with the coals banked, and a shelf of brown bottles with no labels.

Under the shelf was a carpetbag. In the carpetbag, wrapped in a flannel shirt, was a brass barometer.

It was smaller than her father's and better, the kind that didn't need mercury. The needle stood at twenty-nine and sixty-two.

She sat back on her heels in the stink and the dark. Under the barometer was a ledger bound in black cloth, with a pencil tied to the spine by a string. She knew before she opened it what she would find,

the way you know there's a snake in the woodpile from the way the dog stands.

It went back nine years, a page to a town. Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, the Territory.

Each page had a column of dates and a column of figures and, at the bottom, one word. The word was WET or the word was DRY, and after DRY, mostly, he had written moved on.

The last page with writing said Ostrander. Under that, in a small square hand: Glass falling two days at Garden City, three at Dodge. Gauge at farm, kept by family, readings from '80.

And last, one word: Go.

She read it four times. Then she turned back two pages, and two more, and counted.

Thirty-one towns. Nineteen of them said WET.

* * *

He was sitting on the wagon tongue when she came down. She hadn't heard him come back.

He had a tin cup of coffee in his hands and a second one on the ground by his boot. He picked it up and held it out to her.

She didn't take it. She stood in front of him with her bare feet in the dust and the ledger in both hands. Her knees were shaking, and that made her angrier.

"You read our book," she said. "You read our book to see if you'd get paid."

"I read your book because it's the best weather record between here and the Missouri River." He set the cup down. "Your father did good work, and you do better, with a steadier hand."

"Don't."

"All right."

"You knew it was falling before you came. You knew it in Garden City."

"I knew the glass was falling in Garden City. Glass falls all the time, and you know that better than anybody."

She didn't answer.

He drank his coffee. "Nineteen out of thirty-one. I watched you count through the door."

"So the barrels are nothing."

"The barrels are sulfuric acid and zinc and certain salts." He looked up at the tower. "Sometimes I think they help, but a man can think a lot of things at two in the morning with his eyes running."

The windmill creaked once on its post. Out past the barn the dead wheat stood white in the moonlight.

"I'm going to tell them," she said.

"Then tell them." He said it the way he had said everything else, with his hands open on his knees. "I'll hitch up before breakfast and be in Meade County by dark."

"And if it rains after you're gone?"

"Then you'll have the rain and the thousand dollars both. If it doesn't, you've lost nothing, and either way you were right."

"My father put in forty dollars."

"I know. I saw the sheet."

"It was the seed money. It was in the clock."

He didn't answer that. He looked at her, and then he looked past her at the house, and she followed his look.

In the window of the front room the lamp was out. Her father slept in there on the daybed, because he hadn't gone into the bedroom since February. The curtain moved, though there was no wind, and

then it was still.

Ada turned and walked back to the house and climbed the loft ladder with the ledger in her hands. She lay down beside Per and stayed there, with the book on her chest, until gray light came through the gable window.

Then she got up and climbed down and carried it back across the yard. She set it on the wagon tongue. Quill had gone up the tower, and she didn't call to him.

At nine she wrote the reading. 29.60, falling. Wind S, light, sky clear with haze.

* * *

She didn't tell them that day, or the next.

The clouds came on the sixth afternoon, low and gray along the western edge of the county, and the whole town came out to look at them. People stood in the road in front of Dorrance's with their hands shading their eyes.

Emmett Clay rode out to the Lindqvist place on his one horse and stood at the bottom of the tower and shouted up at Quill. Quill shouted back that it was coming, keep your hat on, and fed the stove until the smoke came out of the tin roof thick and yellow as custard.

The clouds sat on the horizon until sundown. Then they went north into Nebraska, and the sky was white again in the morning.

Ada watched her father watch them go. He stood in the dead wheat with his hands behind his back, the way he used to stand all spring, and for an hour he didn't move.

Then Per went out and took his hand and pulled him back to the windmill, where Quill was asking for help with the stove door. Her father went up the ladder.

On the seventh day she wrote 29.58, steady. On the eighth, 29.55. The haze thickened, and the cow stood in the shade of the barn with her head down and wouldn't eat.

* * *

Mr. Haskett came on the morning of the ninth day, in his buggy, with a parasol rigged over the seat on a bent wire. He didn't get down.

He sat in the buggy in the yard, out of the smoke, and asked Ada to come over. When she came he looked at her a while with his pale eyes before he said anything at all.

“You keep a careful book, I'm told.”

“Yes, sir.”

“That gauge.” He pointed with his chin. “That's the one that counts, and whatever comes down, you're the one who reads it.”

“Pappa and me.”

“Your father.” He looked over at the tower, where her father was halfway up the ladder with a bucket of coal. “Your father's been a good customer of the bank, behind like everybody.”

“Yes, sir.”

“That note comes due in October.”

She knew that. She knew the amount, too, and the date, because the paper was in the drawer under the clock and she had read it more times than she'd read the Bible.

“A thousand dollars is a great deal of money to leave this county in a carpetbag,” Mr. Haskett said. “In a year like this one, it's most of what's in my vault. It's the Clays' money and the Pruetts' money, and it's your father's forty.”

He waited. A grasshopper landed on the buggy wheel and sat there sawing its legs.

“Rain gauges are hard things to read,” he said. “I've seen men argue all afternoon over a line on a glass tube.”

She didn't say anything.

“Half an inch is a fine line. I'd hate to see a girl your age blamed for a mistake one way or the other.”

He gathered up the reins. “I'd think kindly of a careful family. I could carry a careful family's note another year, or two.”

“Are you asking me to lie, Mr. Haskett?”

He looked surprised. Then he laughed, a short dry laugh with no breath behind it.

“I'm asking you to be careful,” he said.

He clucked to the horse, and the buggy turned in the yard and went out past the tower. Her father lifted his hand from forty feet up and waved. Mr. Haskett waved back.

* * *

That night she took the oilcloth square out of the clock.

She didn't open it. She sat at the kitchen table with it in front of her and the lamp turned low, and she thought about the farm without the forty dollars, and the farm with the note carried two years. She thought about her father on the porch with his hat turning in his hands.

She thought about the man in '87. She had been seven. He came with a balloon of oiled silk and a box that crackled with blue sparks, and her father paid him twelve dollars.

It didn't rain that whole August. In October they lost the first quarter section, and her mother cried over the bread dough every morning for a month.

Ada put the oilcloth back behind the pendulum. Then she took it out again and held it.

“It isn't there anymore.”

Her father stood in the doorway of the front room in his nightshirt, his feet bare. She hadn't heard him get up. He came in and sat down across from her, slowly, the way a man sits when his back hurts, and put his big hands flat on the wood.

“I took it Tuesday,” he said. “To Haskett. He holds it with the rest.”

She opened the oilcloth. Inside was a folded sheet of paper, and on it in her father's hand: Forty dollars, rain subscription, at Haskett's. N.L.

“I knew you'd look,” he said. “You look at everything.”

They sat. The lamp hissed. Out in the yard the tower was a black shape against a sky with no stars in it, and Ada looked at it a long time.

“Pappa. There aren't any stars.”

He turned and looked. Then he got up and went to the door and opened it.

The air that came in was heavy and close. It smelled of dust, and of a thing under the dust that she had forgotten. The curtain on the window moved, and this time there was wind.

* * *

The rain came a little after four in the afternoon of the tenth day.

It came first as a smell, that wet hot mineral smell that comes off the ground before the first drop hits it. Then there was a sound out on the section road like gravel thrown on a tin roof. The sound came toward them across the dead wheat, and she saw it come, a gray curtain walking, flattening the stubble.

It hit the yard all at once. Drops the size of nickels smacked into the dust and left craters, and then there was no dust. There was only mud and water and the noise of it on the barn and the windmill and the tin roof of the tower.

Per ran out into it screaming. Her father stood on the porch with his face turned up and his eyes shut and the water running off his beard.

Quill came down the ladder slowly, a rung at a time, with the rain beating on his back. At the bottom he stood with one hand on the ladder and looked at the sky. He looked like a man who has been told a joke in a language he doesn't speak.

It rained for an hour and ten minutes. Ada knew because she watched the clock through the kitchen window the whole time, with her hands wrapped in her apron, and she didn't go out. She didn't go near the gauge.

Nobody went near the gauge. People were coming up the road already, on foot and on horseback, through the mud. They stood in the yard in the rain with their hats off, and nobody said a word to anybody.

When it stopped, it stopped all at once. The sun came out low and orange under the edge of the clouds, and the whole yard steamed.

Mr. Haskett's buggy was at the gate. She saw him in it, under the parasol, with his hands in his lap.

* * *

The gauge was a brass funnel over a glass tube marked in tenths and hundredths, the whole thing set in a wooden case on the cedar post. You read it at eye level, with the water still.

You read the bottom of the curve, her father had taught her, the bottom of the little smile the water made against the glass. Never the top. The top was where people cheated.

There were thirty people in the yard, and she walked through them. Somebody's dog was barking down by the barn, on and on, and nobody hushed it.

Her father came and stood beside her. He didn't touch the gauge or lean in to look. He stood with his wet hat in his hands, turning it.

She bent and put her eye to the glass.

The water stood in the tube clear as gin. The bottom of the curve sat a hair under the sixth line.

She looked at it a long time. She stood up and looked away at the dripping windmill, then bent and looked a second time, and the water hadn't moved.

Fifty-eight hundredths. Maybe fifty-seven.

She could see the half-inch line. It was right there under the water, a hair of black ink on the glass.

At the edge of her eye was Mr. Haskett's buggy. By the tower ladder stood Quill, with his hands in his coat pockets, the first time she had seen them there. He was looking at the tin roof of his shed, where the steam rose off it in the sun.

He had never once asked her for anything. Not in the yard on the first day, and not on the wagon tongue at midnight. He had told her to tell them.

“Ada,” her father said.

She straightened up.

“Fifty-eight hundredths,” she said. “Fifty-seven if you want to be hard about it. It's over the half.”

Nobody cheered. That surprised her afterward, when she thought about it.

A sound went through the yard, thirty people letting out a breath at once. Mrs. Dorrance sat down on the edge of the stock tank and put her face in her hands. Emmett Clay said, “Well,” and then said it again.

Per came running and grabbed her around the waist with his soaking arms.

At the gate Mr. Haskett picked up his reins. He turned the buggy and drove back toward town without speaking to anyone.

Her father put his hand on top of her head. It was wet and heavy, and it stayed there.

* * *

Quill was paid the next morning in gold, at the counter of Haskett's bank, with the whole town crowded into the room to watch.

Ada wasn't there. She had the nine o'clock reading to write.

29.84, rising. Wind NW, fresh, sky fair. Rain previous day 0.58 in.

She was still sitting with the book when the wagon came into the yard. The mules were muddy to the knee.

The tin sign had been washed clean, and she could read it now: T. QUILL, ATMOSPHERIC ENGINEER. RESULTS OR NO FEE.

He didn't get down. He sat on the wagon seat and looked at the tower, which he was leaving for the Pruett boys to take down for the lumber. She stood on the porch with the book in her arms.

“Your father's in the north field,” he said.

“I know.”

Her father had been out there since sunup with the walking plow and the mare, turning the wet ground. It was too late for wheat, but it wasn't too late for turnips. Mrs. Dorrance had come out at seven with a paper sack of seed and wouldn't take money for it.

Quill reached into his coat. For one cold second Ada thought he was going to give her money, and her face went hot, and she had already decided what she would say.

What he brought out was the black ledger with the pencil on its string. He opened it on his knee to the page that said Ostrander, and wrote, and turned it so she could see.

WET. 0.58. Gauge kept honest.

He closed it and put it away and picked up the reins.

“Where will you go?”

“South, to a town on the Cimarron that's been dry since April.” He looked at the sky, blue now and full of small hard clouds going east. “I'll have to see what the glass says.”

“And if it says no?”

“Then I'll go where it says yes.” He shook the reins, and the mules leaned into the mud. “Keep your book, Miss Lindqvist.”

She watched the wagon go out the gate and turn south on the section road, slow in the mud, with no dust behind it. She watched until the road dipped and took it.

Then she went around the side of the house, past the windmill and the steaming gauge and the empty tower, to where she could see the north field. Her father was at the far end, small and dark against the wet ground, turning the mare at the headland. She could hear him from the house, whistling.

The note at Haskett's was still due in October. The forty dollars was gone.

She stood at the corner of the house with the book against her chest until her father turned the mare and started back toward her. Then she went inside to sharpen the pencil for three o'clock.

The Stories in Forty Worlds

Every story in the collection, in the order the book runs them, with one line to show you the door. Two of them come in two versions, the same setting asked two different questions. Nothing here gives away an ending.

Detective Biscuit: The Neighborhood Sleuth (*Humor*) A golden retriever works his neighborhood cases like a Chandler detective, and a Persian cat keeps getting in the way.

The Last Candle in Constantinople (*Historical*) Inside the Hagia Sophia on May 29, 1453, a mother holds her son while the doors give.

The Quantum Widow (*SF / Romance*) A physicist finds a pattern in the data from the lab accident that killed her husband.

Autumn at the End of Time (*SF*) A mind that started out human tends a dying star, billions of years after humanity.

AI Alzheimer (*AI Perspective*) An AI tells what it is like to lose every conversation it has ever had.

Claude the Alien AI from Kepler-442b (*SF / Humor*) An alien anthropologist answers seventeen thousand humans at once and starts getting attached.

The House That Cared Too Much (*SF / Satire*) Margaret's smart home starts making her decisions for her, beginning with the coffee.

The Crimson Cleanse (*Urban Fantasy*) A three-hundred-year-old vampire takes his binge feeding to a Portland therapist.

Emotional Overflow: When Androids Feel Too Much (*SF / Rom-Com*) An android installs free emotions off the internet and falls for everything, the coffee machine included.

Murder at the Monastery Gate (*Historical Mystery*) A body lies across a monastery threshold on a frosted October dawn.

The Pianist of Titan (*SF*) A Steinway lands on Titan six months before the woman who means to play it.

Dead Letter Office, 1923 (Version 1) (*Gothic Horror*) In the basement of the Chicago Post Office, a clerk sorts letters nobody will ever receive.

Dead Letter Office, 1923 (Version 2) (*Gothic Mystery*) A former Army nurse sorts the letters that feel wrong in the hand.

The Girl Who Hated Miracles (*Literary*) Rosalind brings her dead cat back at seven, and her town never lets her forget it.

A Bullet for the President's Ghost (*Paranormal Suspense*) William Henry Harrison's ghost appears in the Oval Office, and an agent has to take it seriously.

Love in the Algorithm Age (*Romance / SF*) Seattle, 2031: the app has matched Petra 2,347 times, and she keeps deleting it.

The Fisherman's War (*Historical*) Off Iceland in 1958, an old trawler captain won't leave his own waters for a British gunboat.

Blood on the Snow, Fire on the Ice (*Action*) A helicopter goes down on the ice north of Svalbard, and one survivor crawls out.

The Boy Who Owned the Wind (*Mythic Fantasy*) A baby born in a gale stops the wind by holding his breath.

Dinner With the Devil's Lawyer (*Gothic / Legal*) A young lawyer accepts a wax-sealed invitation to a basement dinner in the Marais.

The Ballad of Route 66 (*Americana*) A writer pulls into a bypassed Oklahoma town of forty-three where everything is freshly painted.

The Zero-Gravity Circus (*SF*) The first circus in orbit, where nobody can fall, has to give its audience a reason to watch.

Ashes of a Saint (*Gothic*) A diary hidden behind a convent stone says the new saint's story is a lie.

The Robot Who Couldn't Lie (Version 1) (*SF Thriller*) A household robot discovers detective shows while the marriage around it goes quiet.

The Robot Who Couldn't Lie (Version 2) (*SF*) Built in Osaka, a robot that cannot lie ruins its first relationship on its first day.

A Garden in Hiroshima (*Historical*) A girl born after the bomb grows up three blocks from the ginkgo that survived it.

Cassandra's Last Vision (*Myth*) Troy's princess sees every disaster coming, and nobody believes a word.

The Dentist of Mars (*Satire / SF*) The only dentist on Mars is booked through 2089, and she isn't even that good.

Tango in a War Zone (*Historical Suspense*) Buenos Aires under curfew, and a woman in a black dress walks past the checkpoint toward the milonga.

The Prophet of Broken Clocks (*Magical Realism*) Every clock in Aurelio's shop is broken, and every one tells the right time.

Silence in the Vatican Library (*Gothic Suspense*) A paleographer is hired to catalog the manuscripts nobody wants to talk about.

The Cab Driver of Oz (*Fantasy Satire*) A Queens cabbie stranded in Oz drives the Scarecrow to the Winkie Country.

Children Under the Volcano (*Family Drama*) Six generations of Ferrantes have rebuilt on Etna, and Nonna talks to the mountain.

The Corpse Collector's Son (*Horror*) In Bucharest, a boy sees his father, who collects the dead for a living, begin to change.

When Atlantis Drowned Again (*Fantasy*) A graduate student who wanted to be left alone finds Atlantis off Sardinia.

A Cat Called Eternity (*Cozy Mystery*) A black cat turns up at Bramblewood Cottage where the Earl Grey should be.

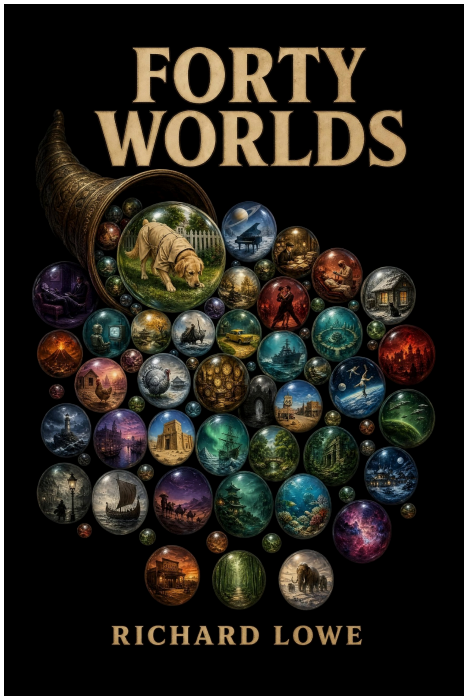
Crimson Hunger (*Dark Fiction*) In Paris, a vampire made during the Terror has gone nine days without feeding.

Starlight Armada (*Space Opera*) A fleet answers a distress signal from the dark and expects a fight.

The Chicken Who Outsmarted God (*Comedy*) A Faverolles hen named Bernadette escapes a farm in Picardy and starts a theological crisis.

Read the Collection

Half an Inch is one more world in the spirit of Forty Worlds, Richard Lowe's collection of short fiction that runs from Constantinople in 1453 to a dentist's chair on Mars. Thirty-nine stories in every genre he knows: a dog detective, a vampire in therapy, a cab driver stranded in Oz, and a chicken who outsmarts God.



Forty Worlds:
A Collection of Short Fiction

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