



Abruptions

3 Minute Stories to Awaken the Mind

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“Matthews stories are like friends from small towns: They are honest, warm, occasionally lyrical and as strange and idiosyncratic as the rest of us.” (Arthur Sabatini, Philadelphia Inquirer)

During the last decade of his life, author Jack Matthews wrote a series of 1-2 page prose pieces (which he dubbed "Abruptions" or "very short stories that end abruptly").

Many episodes read like contemporary fables or sketches of quirky people from small midwest towns. Two older women have a long-running feud about what flowers should go on the fence between their houses. An owner of a movie studio in the 1930s throws out any audience member who misbehaves. An office worker is distracted by a pretty woman washing the outside windows.

Other stories sound like wild fairy tales. What if one super-intelligent Siamese twin were conjoined with an idiot brother? What if a witch's curse caused every third word uttered by a person to go unsaid? What if a woman has terrifying dreams about a missing watch?

Some stories simply ponder the imponderable. Why do certain memories persist or reappear? Why do elderly people become set in their ways? Why do people become blind to certain things?

These stories are a fitting coda for Matthew's career as a storyteller. As deep and dark as these abruptions can become, they are told with simple language, flashes of humor and a sage's sense of wonder and irony.

Jack Matthews (1925-2013) published 20+ books and taught literature at Ohio University over four decades. His story collections were praised by authors such as Eudora Welty and W.P. Kinsella and received positive reviews in places like *New York Times Book Review* and *Los Angeles Times Book Review*.

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