
GARDENING without GLOVES

Short Fiction
Roger Ladd Memmott



What comes of **GARDENING WITHOUT GLOVES**? Read each of the twelve stories in this volume to find answers that you wouldn't expect. On one level Memmott's book is an excursion into the psychology of love, while on another level it voices the despair of love and relationships misunderstood. One story shows this weathered visage and another one that. The characters, in their own dangerous and diametrical ways, are overcome by the elusive, and sometimes disillusioning, expectations of love. Flawed by misapprehension, they are often left bereaved, puzzling only the ambiguities of love, or what they thought was love, and how it slipped away.

Excellent...storytelling executed with taste and style.

— *Writer's Digest*

"There is energy here, the kind of sensual energy that is lacking from most fiction today...a fascinating piece of writing."

— Raymond Federman, author of *Take It or Leave It*

"Twelve stories, separated by short aphoristic tales, serve as a study of the human heart, and the internal and external combustion engines of desire and behavior."

— *Critics' Pick, BookSurge*

Amazon.com Review for ***Gardening without Gloves***

Four Stars - ★★★★★

Reviewed by Zinta Aistars

I have read this book once. I will read it again. And, I'm sure, again. Roger Ladd Memmott is a master of words. He understands the art of writing. He understands how many levels of impact every word, every turn of a phrase, can provide when the stroke is as masterly as his. Again and again, I caught my breath with wonder. If there was any slight inclusion anywhere in this gem, it was perhaps an occasional overuse of a strong word/image; e.g., "switchfrogs." A word with that kind of uniqueness is not so quickly forgotten; a writer should be careful not to use it too often and thus lose the impact. But that's nitpicking. Memmott deserves a standing ovation, and receives from this writer a nod of highest respect. He is not only a writer; he is, in the truest sense of the word, an artist.

STORY SYNOPSES

An Optional Illusion – In retrospect a young man witnesses the “landscape of his youth” and one particular event of infatuation and violence that stays with him like a tremor.

Gardening Without Gloves – If marriage, to be successful, is simply a matter of forgiveness, then the commitment to love should be greater and is more important than love itself. A sad realization for two divorcees who long for intimacy and a renewal of trust, only to confront the possibility of dread.

Pittons – An abused woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown grows suspicious of her child’s imaginary friend and dreads the very real possibility that he has vanished into another world.

Solanum tuberosum – A middle-aged man picks up a young woman hitchhiker and confronts within himself something beyond fear.

Greetings from Zanesville (or “Through the Anonymous Skin of Unclaimed Bones”) – A man returns home with his wife after a Rock Concert and, sexually snubbed, takes a solitary walk in the park. There, he confronts himself in the eyes of a mugger. When he returns home, all battered and self-abused, he is filled with a grief-stricken understanding of the transient nature and nuances of love.

Euripides’ Detour – A newlywed’s fantasies bordering on mythomania, coupled with a problematic childhood and the improbability of love, obscure the truth.

Watermelon Tart – A neurotic woman who has undergone cosmetic surgery disguises herself and journeys by night to the arms of her lover. When she gets off at the wrong bus stop—disoriented, lost—she is beaten and robbed, and the sorrowful implications of her journey rise before her like vampires at dusk.

Love – A meandering skunk and the disquieting memories of childhood reaffirm the ambivalent nature of love between fathers and sons.

Mr. Edwards’ Demise – A retired college professor is run down by an automobile while crossing the street. The moment before impact, in the chrome of the bumper, he envisions a reflection of himself and the imperatives of love, and then the world opens before him with all its possibilities.

How Edna Went Blind – A couple mistakes one another for what they need at a given moment in their lives. Now, there is much to consider in their relationship, the give and take, and whether even the fragments of love are sufficient to enlighten the eye.

The Happiest Man in the World – A retarded boy, falsely accused of a vicious crime against the girl he loved, comes to realize that his only hope rests in a home for boys.

How War Lost Its Meaning – An acerbic portrayal of the individual struggling to maintain his sanity in a world at war and a vivid rendering of the intensely poignant love that keeps him sane.