*The Best of Brevity*, edited by Zoë Bossiere and Dinty W. Moore rev. Anika Lotti

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*The Best of Brevity* is a collection of short nonfiction essays edited by Zoë Bossiere and Dinty W. Moore. These essays are written with only 750 words or less in a variety of styles, such as memoir, narrative, lyric, braided, hermit crab and hybrid. The realness and authenticity of each of the authors shines through in their short additions to the collection. Bossiere is an editor-at-large and Moore is the editor-in-chief of *Brevity: A Journal of Concise Literary Nonfiction.* Bossiere has been published in *Guernica, The Rumpus, North Dakota Quarterly,* and *Essay Daily.* Moore won the Grub Street Nonfiction Book Prize for his memoir, *Between Panic & Desire.*

Although brief, these essays delve into real world circumstances in a thorough and honest way. “Hairy Credentials” by Nicole Cyrus brings to light something that should not be an issue yet is viewed as one: “Budgeting: experienced in allocating and spending thousands of personal dollars every year to have silky tresses like Oprah Winfrey to avoid questions about her professionalism and discourage management from branding her as a radical.” By formatting it as a resume, the essay highlights what takes precedence over someone’s qualifications. The absurdness of focusing on the physical differences is pulled to the forefront. The exasperation at only being seen for what makes them stand out is distinct through the language of the essay. Like the others, this essay chooses to look at the reality of things without trying to make it sound better than it is, or like it does not exist.

The pressing nature of the content of these essays is prevalent in the world we live in. “A Most Dangerous Game” by Alexis Wiggins is a re-imagination of *The Most Dangerous Game* by Richard Connell. Connell focused on what it means to face off against other men, one as hunter and the other as prey. Wiggins illustrates how threatening a man who won’t take no for an answer can be towards a woman. “It wasn’t men who were hunted.” The unfiltered way in which she addresses how dating has become a game without any real connection other than physical is eye opening. The foreboding tone that lingers throughout which breaks into a sense of panic and fear as the reality of what it means to be a woman is laid out truly is so impactful. As with the other essays, it does not shy away from difficult subject matter.

The heavy content each of these essays contains is drawn out by the striking, yet distinctly different, tones they each create. “When We Played” by Matthew Komatsu moves between what it was like to play war as children and what it is like to fight in one as an adult. The most notable difference, “*When we played war as boys, we never died.*” The sobering reality of the innocence of young minds creates a somber almost bitter-sweet tone for the essay. Komatsu also brings this element of fear into it, the panic a soldier feels in the heat of battle is almost tangible. Weaving together how war is perceived by children and the devastation it truly brings a fondness for the simplicity of childhood as well as heartbreak over it’s violent destruction. The emotion the author’s pour into these essays through the tone is effective in conveying their message through so few words.

The willingness of the authors to be unfiltered and truthful contributes heavily to the tones these essays take on. “I Remain Very Sorry for What I Did to the Little Black Kitten” by Jenny Boully has a raw openness to it: “And because I wanted to exude a tough-girl personality, I myself got out of the car and pried her off.” Boully does not sugarcoat her actions. She does not attempt to paint herself in a better light. She owns up to the fact that she pushed the cat out of the car and later showed her no mercy when she attempted to hold on. The vividness of the images she creates and her remorse for her actions, that seeps through her words, creates an overwhelming sadness throughout the essay. This, and every, essay tackles the unpleasantness that comes with life and provides the opportunity for readers to look at the author’s true actions.

The completeness each essay is able to maintain in the limited amount of words they are able to do it in is incredible. The tone and emotional impact these essays are able to create in such a limited amount of space is particularly striking. The willingness of the author’s to be open and candid about their experiences truly creates a bond between them and the reader. The distinctive independence each piece is able to maintain is similar to a collection of short stories. Each is its own unique entity that compliments the other works in the collection well. When compiling this collection, Bossiere and Moore did a wonderful job at selecting essays with a wide range of topics that are interconnected in their messages and meaningful in their deliveries.