

The complete collection of Kate Wilhelm's
stories from Damon Knight's Orbit Anthologies

KATE WILHELM
in ORBIT

Volume Two

With a special introduction by
GORDON VAN GELDER

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KATE WILHELM IN ORBIT - VOLUME TWO

Kate Wilhelm

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All of the stories in Kate Wilhelm in Orbit - Volume Two were first published between 1972 and 1978 in the Orbit series of science fiction anthologies, edited by Damon Knight.

This collection includes: The Fusion Bomb; On the Road to Honeyville; The Red Canary; The Scream; A Brother to Dragons, a Companion of Owls; Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang; Ladies and Gentlemen, This is Your Crisis; State of Grace; and Moongate.

First edition.

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Kate Wilhelm in Orbit

VOLUME TWO

Kate Wilhelm

Table of Contents

The Fusion Bomb

On the Road to Honeyville

The Red Canary

The Scream

A Brother to Dragons, a Companion of Owls

Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang

Ladies and Gentlemen, This is Your Crisis

State of Grace

Moongate

Introduction

I can't recall the event, but sometime in the 1990s, James Sallis and Kate Wilhelm met up after long years of being out of touch. (Most likely it was at a mystery convention.) They spoke of the short stories they wrote in the 1970s and both of them said, "I'd write more stories like that if there was any market for it nowadays."

But the 1990s were not the 1970s and venues like *Orbit* were scarce. Venues like *Orbit* are scarce in any decade—editors like Damon Knight don't come along too often. In fact, one of the greatest compliments I've received in my career remains the time Kate said to me, "You edit my stories with the same sort of care and attention Damon did."

The *Orbit* anthologies were published between 1966 and 1980. As it happens, those were the first fourteen years of my life, so I wasn't reading the books as they were published. Indeed, as these things happen, I only got turned on to science fiction in 1980, due in part to my discovery of another Damon Knight anthology—a book called *The Dark Side* that I came across in a used bookstore in Carlsbad, New Mexico.

I was, however, shaped by reading stories from those *Orbit* anthologies—"The Secret Place" by Richard McKenna, "Mother to the World" by Richard Wilson, "I Gave Her Sack and Sherry" by Joanna Russ, "Shattered Like a Glass Goblin" by Harlan Ellison, "Continued on the Next Rock" by R. A. Lafferty and so on, and so forth, and add a heap of additional "so on"s to that list.

And Kate Wilhelm's stories.

Through the twenty-one volumes of *Orbit*, Kate provided stories for nineteen of them. Her work was to the books what Diane Keaton was to Woody Allen's 1970s films, what Diana Ross was to Motown. Her stories anchor the books; the nineteen stories she contributed

to *Orbit* form the center or backbone of the anthologies as surely as de Camp's and Heinlein's work defined Astounding in Campbell's golden era.

And what a run they were! The stories assembled here—as you'll soon see—are as good an assemblage of fantastic fiction as you're likely to find anywhere, from apocalyptic futures to uncanny travels, from light comedic surrealism to the darkest psychological insights. There are a lot of scientific experiments here, and a lot of grim visions of the future. Some of them—like that of “The Red Canary”—are diminished by the grim realities we've experienced since the stories were first published. More of them, however, are amplified in 2015 by the breadth and depth of vision Kate shared four decades ago.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are indeed our crises.

What struck me most as I reread these stories is how fully they epitomize the type of science fiction that picked up the “humanist” label in the 1980s. It's easy to forget now the extent to which science fiction was a tech-heavy body of work meant for young men who dreamed of flying to the stars. I recently read a batch of SF magazines from the 1950s and it jolted me to realize how thoroughly science fiction of 2015 has embraced and embodied the literary virtues that *Orbit* showcased: an interest in average people facing extraordinary situations, a passion for human interests in the face of scientific or technological change. I suspect there's a great number of writers now—many working in the fertile field of Young Adult fiction—who are scarcely aware of the debt they owe to Kate Wilhelm and other *Orbit* and New Wave writers for paving the way for their dystopias and their cautionary speculations. It would be fatuous to suggest that today's numerous Young Adult dystopian novels would not exist without Kate Wilhelm's influence. However, it's entirely fair to wonder if these books today would be so good if Kate had not set such a high standard with tales.

Personally, I think they would not.

As long as I'm offering such opinions, let me note one other thing that struck me on reading these stories, something very personal. See, after twelve years as a book editor and eighteen at the helm of F&SF, I'm not the same reader I once was. Technique matters more to me now; I'm as likely to notice individual brushstrokes

as I am to admire the sweep of the whole canvas. Consequently, on those occasions when I go back to read works I enjoyed in my youth, I approach them with trepidation and I usually come away with disappointment.

Considering how vividly I remember reading *Where Late the Sweet Birds Sang* on my bed in suburban New Jersey in 1981 (remembering how I looked up from the world of the book and watched the shadows of leaves dance across the sheets, remembering how disquieted and awestruck I felt), it's no surprise I put off rereading that story until last.

What is surprising is how much better the story is than I remembered. Elements of the story that went over my head when I was fourteen landed squarely between my ears this time. Subtleties had become profundities.

There are some bleak futures imagined in these stories, but sometimes we make a future better.

I hope you find these stories as rewarding as I do.

—Gordon Van Gelder

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The Fusion Bomb

(Orbit 10 — 1972)

At dusk the barrier islands were like a string of jewels gleaming in the placid bay. The sea wasn't reflecting now, the only lights that showed were those of the islands and the shore lights that were from two to four miles westward. The islands looked like an afterthought, as if someone had decided to outline the coast with a faulty pen that skipped as it wrote in sparkles. Here and there dotted lines tethered the jewels, kept them from floating away, and lines joined them one to another in a series, connective tissue too frail to endure the fury of the sea. Then came a break, a dark spot with only a sprinkling of lights at one end, the rest of the island swallowed in blackness of tropical growth.

The few lights at the southern end seemed inconsequential, the twinkling of hovering fireflies, to be swept away with a brush of the hand. No lines joined this dark speck with the other, clearly more civilized, links of the chain that stretched to the north and angled off to the south. No string of incandescence tied it to the mainland. It was as if this dark presence had come from elsewhere to shoulder itself into the chain where it stood unrecognized and unacknowledged by its neighbors.

It was shaped like a primitive arrowhead. If the shaft had been added, the feathers would have touched land hundreds of miles to the south, at St. Augustine, possibly. The island was covered with loblolly pines, live oaks dripping with Spanish moss, cypress and magnolia trees. The thickened end was white sand, stucco houses, and masses of hewn stones, some in orderly piles and rows, others tossed about, buried in sand so that only corners showed, tumbled down the beach, into the water where the sea and bay joined. *Philodendron*, gone wild, had claimed many of the blocks, climbing them with stems as thick as wrists, split leaves hiding the worked surface of the granite and sandstone, as if nature were working hard to efface what man had done to her island. Those blocks that had been lost to the sea had long since been naturalized by barnacles, oysters, seaweeds; generations of sergeant majors and wrasses and blue crabs and stonefish had lived among them.

At low tide, as it was now, the water whispered gently to the rocks, secrets of the sea murmured in an unintelligible tongue that evoked memories and suggested understanding. Eliot listened hard, then answered: "So I'll tell the old bastard, take your effing island, and your effing job, and your effing money and stuff it all you know where." The sea mocked him and he took another drink. He sat on one of the stones, his back against another one, and he put a motor on the rocky end of the island and wound it up. It was a rubber band motor. The arrowhead pointed due north and cut a clean swath, its motion steady and sure, like a giant carrier. And when he had circled the world, when he had docked at all the strange ports and sampled all the strange customs and strange foods, then he didn't know what to do with his mobile island, and he sank it, deep into the Mariannas Trench where it could never be raised again, where it would vanish

without a sign that it had existed. He drank again, this time emptying the glass. For a moment he hefted it, then he put it down on the rock next to him.

“Eliot! Where are you?”

He didn’t answer, but he could see the white shape moving among the rocks. She knew damn well where he was.

“Pit, old man, I’m through. I quit. I’ll leave by the mail boat in the morning, or swim over, or fly on the back of a cormorant.

“Eliot! For God’s sake, don’t be so childish! Stop playing games. Everyone’s waiting for you.”

“Ah, Beatrice, the unattainable, forever pure, forever fleeing, and fleet.” But I had you once, twice, three times. Hot and sweaty in my arms.

“You’re drunk! Why? Why tonight? Everyone’s waiting for you.”

She was very near now, not so near that he could make out her features, but near enough to know that she wore a white party dress, that she wore pearls at her throat, near enough so that the elusive whisper of the sea now became water swishing among rocks. He stood up. She was carrying her sandals.

“You’ll bruise your feet. Stay there, or better, go back and tell them that I do not wish to attend another bloody party, not another one for years and years.”

“Eliot, the new girl’s here. You’ll want to meet her. And... it’s a surprise, Eliot. Please come now. He’ll be so disappointed.”

“Why? He already hired her, didn’t he? Tomorrow’s time enough for me to meet her. And the only surprise around here is that we don’t all die of boredom.”

He picked up his glass and let a trickle of melted ice wet his lips. He should have brought the pitcher of gin and lemonade. Have to remember, he told himself sternly, no half measures from now on. Been too moderate around here. Moderation’s no damn good for island living. He stood up. The sea tilted and the rock tried to slide him off into the water. He could hear vicious laughter, masked as waves rushed around stones. Beatrice caught his hand and led him out of the jumbled rocks.

“Come on, let’s take a walk,” she said. But the drunkenness was passing, and he shook his head.

"I'm okay," he said. "Sitting too long, that's all. Let's go to the damn party and get it over with."

She half led, half pushed him along the cypress boardwalk toward the main house.

"The new girl. What's she like?"

"I'm not sure. You know she got over on the pretext that I had recommended her. Turns out that we lived in the same town back when we were growing up. So I should know her, except that I'm ten years older than she is. I dated her brother when I was sixteen, but I can't remember much about her. Or her brother either, for that matter. She was Gina's age when I saw her last. She's twenty now, a student, looking for summer work, perfect to spell Marianne while she has her baby, and so on. But you'll see."

Just what we need, he thought. A young single girl to liven things up around here. "Is she pretty?"

"No. Very plain actually. But do you think that will make any difference?" Beatrice sounded amused.

How well we know each other. She can follow my thought processes, come to my conclusions for me, without even thinking about it. A simple temporary dislocation of the ego. The boardwalk led them around the ruins, and they approached the house from the back. Curiously old-fashioned and unglamorous, one floor that rambled, deep porch; there was a lot of ironwork, grilles, rails, scrolls and curlicues that should have been offensive but were pleasing. They skirted a swimming pool that had been concerted to a sunken garden and walked along the ornate porch to the front entrance. Wide windows, uncovered, with massive shutters at their sides. View of a room the width of the house, fireplace on one wall, bar and stools, low, gold gleaming cypress furniture, red Spanish tile floors that didn't show the scars of the constant polishing of the sand. Beyond the room there was a terrace, shielded from the sea wind by a louvered wall of glass. Moving figures broken into sections by the partly opened glass slats, the hum of voices, echo of Spanish guitars. All substantial and real, all but the fragmented people.

Eliot took a deep breath and entered the terrace. Beatrice paused a moment to speak to Mr. Bonner, who would go over to her place to babysit. Eliot was aware of their low conversation, as he was aware

of the new girl who stood out because she was new and very pale. Not pretty. Homely, actually. He nodded at Mr. Pitcock, whose eyes always seemed to see more than was visible. He was seventy; why weren't his eyes starting to dim? Pitcock knew that he'd been drinking, knew that he'd tried to forget the party, knew that if Beatrice hadn't been sent after him, he would have passed it up. So fire me, he thought at the old man, and knew that the old man was aware of that thought also. They shook hands and Pitcock introduced the new girl.

"Donna, this is the project director, Dr. Kalin. Eliot, Donna Bensinger."

"Hello, Eliot." Too fast. Should have called him Dr. Kalin. He didn't like her pasty skin, or the limpness of her hand when he touched it, or the pale, myopic eyes, and the thin dun-colored hair that looked as if it needed a shampoo.

"I hope you won't find it too dull here, Miss Bensinger," he said, and looked past her at Ed Delizzio, who was standing at the bar. "Excuse me."

He thought he heard the dry chuckle of Thomas Pitcock as he left them, but he didn't turn back to see. "Christ," he said to Ed. "Just Christ!"

"Yeah, I know what you mean." Ed poured a martini and put it in Eliot's hand. "Drink. That's all that's left." He refilled his own glass. "After this breaks up we're going to play some poker over at Lee's house. Want to sit in?"

"Sure."

"The buffet is ready in the dining room." Mrs. Bonner's voice was eerie over the intercom.

"Come on, let's eat." Pitcock led them across the patio, into the house, his hand on Donna's arm, talking cheerfully to her. He was tall, straight, bald, brown. Why didn't he stoop and falter?

Mary and Leland Moore beckoned to Eliot. Mary was small and tanned, hair sun-bleached almost white. She always seemed breathless. "Can you come over later? The boys are playing poker."

Eliot accepted again and they went into the dining room with the others. On the table was a glazed cold turkey, hot lobster in sherry sauce, biscuits, salads. There was an assortment of wines. He picked at the food and drank steadily, refusing to pretend an interest in the

small talk and forced gaiety about him.

“I have no theory to forward as yet, sir,” he said distinctly.

“Damn it, a hypothesis then.”

“I don’t have that much yet.”

“A hunch. A wild guess. Don’t couch it in formal terms. You must be thinking something by now. What?”

“Nothing. Can’t you get it through your head that I won’t be forced into a generalization.”

“You’re afraid to.”

He reached for the champagne and when he raised his gaze from the iced bottle, he caught the bright blue eyes on him. For a second he almost believed they had been speaking, but then he heard Marty’s voice, and a giggle from Donna, and he knew that he had said nothing. The old man continued to watch him as he poured more champagne, spilling some of it, and replaced the bottle. “Fuck off,” he said, raising his glass and returning the silent stare. Donna giggled louder and this time the others laughed also, and the old man’s gaze shifted as he, too, chuckled at Marty’s story.

After they ate, Mrs. Bonner appeared with a birthday cake, and they all sang to Eliot and toasted him with champagne. At eleven thirty Beatrice signaled that they should wrap it up. Eliot stood up and made his way to Pitcock.

“Thanks for the party,” he said. He was very unsteady.

“Wait a second, will you. I have something for you, didn’t want to bring it out before.” The old man said good-bye to his guests and then left Eliot for a moment.

If he brings me a check, I’ll rip it to shreds before his eyes. He thought longingly of another drink, but he didn’t want to delay to mix it and drink it. The old man returned carrying a bulky package. He watched Eliot’s face as he tore off the wrappings.

“I know how much you’ve admired my Escher works; thought you might like one.” It was a large, complicated drawing of builders who were destroying what they built, all in one process. Eliot stared at it: the figures seemed to be moving, toiling up stairs, stairs that flattened out and went down again somehow even as he watched. He blinked and the movement stopped. “Thanks,” he said. “Just thanks.”

Pitcock nodded. He turned to the window to look out at the

beach. "It's a strange night, isn't it? Don't you feel the strangeness? If it were August I'd say a hurricane was on its way, but not so soon. Just strange, I guess."

Eliot waited a moment, wanting to force the talk to the futile project, the open-ended task that Pitcock had hired them to do, but he clamped his lips hard and remained silent.

"You accept the job then?" the old man asked, in the plush office on the thirtieth floor of the glass and plastic building in New York. "Without questioning its merits? Promise to see it through?"

"I'll sign the three-year contract," Eliot said. "Seems fair enough to give it that much of a try."

"Good. And at the end of the three years, we'll talk again, and between now and then, no matter how many doubts you raise, you'll carry on."

Eliot shrugged. I will do my best to uphold the honor of the project. He said, "I don't pretend to think that we'll be able to accomplish anything, except to add to the data, and to bring some order to a field that's in chaos. Maybe that's enough for now. I don't know."

The old man turned toward him, away from the window. "It's working out. I know you don't agree, but I can feel that it's taking shape. And now this feeling of strangeness. That's part of it. Undercurrents. Someone's projecting strong undercurrents, strong enough to affect others. You'll see. You'll see."

The others were loitering near the sunken garden, all except Beatrice, who had gone ahead to relieve Bonner of his babysitting chores. Eliot fell into step beside Mary.

Soon she'll say, you've been awfully quiet, something to that effect. And I'll say, thinking. Been here two years and two months, for what? Doing what? Indulging a crazy old man in his obsession.

"Eliot, are you going to stay?"

"What?" He looked at the small woman, but could see only the pale top of her head.

"You've been acting like a man trying to come to a decision. We wondered if you are considering leaving here."

"I've been considering that for two years and two months," he said. "I'm no nearer a decision than I was when I first took it up." He indicated the house behind them. "He's crazy, you know."

“I don’t know if he is or not. This whole project seems crazy to me, but then, it always did.”

“Is Lee getting restless?”

“Isn’t everyone?”

“Yeah, there is that.”

The trouble was that there were only ten people on the island and they all spent nine-tenths of their time on it. They were all tired of each other, tired of the island paradise, tired of Mrs. Bonner’s turkeys and champagne parties, tired of the endless statistics and endless data that went nowhere.

We go through the motions of having fun at the parties, and each of us is there in body only, our minds busy with the data, busy trying to find an out without cutting off our connections with the old man. Each one of us afraid the goose will suddenly stop production, wondering if we have enough of the golden eggs to live on the rest of our lives, wondering if any of this is worth it. If anything out there in the real world would be any better, make any more sense. Twenty-five thousand a year, almost all clear, living quarters and most of the food thrown in, no need for cars or servants. Company plane to take us away for vacations, bring us back. Travel expenses, hotel expenses, everything paid for. Looking for ways to spend money. Endless project at twenty-five thousand a year, a raise to thirty, or forty? Keen eyes that see too much, files with too much in them, birthdays, childhood friends, illnesses, mistakes almost forgotten, but in the files. Mary was talking again.

“I almost wish we never had come here, you know? Lee would have been fine. He had a job at Berkeley all lined up. He would like to teach, I think. But probably not now. Not after this kind of freedom and so much money.

“He can always quit,” Eliot said more brusquely than was called for. He liked Mary. Mary and Gina were the only ones that he did like. Neither was a threat to him in any way.

“At least we can always say that, can’t we?”

They paused at his house and he remembered that he was supposed to bring some mixer. “I’ll be over in a few minutes,” he said, and left her as Lee and Ed drew near. He put the drawing down, but he didn’t want to look at it again yet. Not until he was sober.

He stared at himself in the bathroom mirror and thought, thirty. Good Christ! Back in April Beatrice had become thirty, and had cried. Then, furious with him for taking her, with herself for needing solace, she had run away from him, and since then had been cool and pleasant, and very distant. If he cried now, would she appear from nowhere to put her arm about his shoulders, to pat him awkwardly as she maneuvered him into bed and reassured him that he still had most of his life ahead? He laughed and turned away, not liking the mirror image. He was deeply suntanned, and his eyes were dark brown, his eyebrows straight and heavy, nearly touching, like a solid, permanent scowl.

“Just one thing more, Mr. Pitcock. Why me? Why did you select me for this project?” The contract was signed, the question made safe by the signatures.

“Because you’re avaricious enough to do it. Because you’re bright enough to see it through. Because you’re cynical enough not to get involved personally no matter what the data start to reveal.”

That’s me, he thought, searching his kitchen for mixer. Avaricious. Bright. Cynical.

Donna was seated at the round table, across from an empty chair, his chair. He put the mixer down and looked at them. Ed Delizzio, twenty-five, a statistician from Pitcock Enterprises. Dark, Catholic, observed all the holy days, went to mass each Sunday, had a crucifix over his bed, a picture of Mary and Jesus on his wall. Marty Tiomkin, atheist, twenty-four. Slavic type, tall, broad, serious, with a slow grin, a slower laugh, thick long fingers. Probably could swim to England, if the spirit ever moved him. Very powerful. He was the computer expert. He could program it, repair it, make it go when it was sick, talk it into revealing correlations or synchronicities where none seemed possible. He treated it like a wife who might fly to a distant lover at any time unless she received unswerving loyalty and devotion. Marty and Ed had been hired at the same time, almost two years ago. At first they had had separate houses, like the rest of the staff, but after a month they had decided to share one house. Inseparable now, they went off on weekend trips, during which they picked up girls from one of the northern islands, or made a tour of the houses of Charleston. Now and then they brought girls back to

the island with them.

Donna was next to Marty, and on the other side of her was Leland Moore. He was tall and intense, probably the most honest one there, tortured by the futility of what he was doing, but also by the memory of a fatherless childhood in a leaky fifteen-foot trailer that his mother kept filled with other people's ironing. He wanted land, a farm or a ranch, with hills on it, and water. Slowly, month by month, he came nearer that goal, and he wouldn't leave, but he would suffer. Sitting by him was Mary, who worried about her husband too much. Who couldn't understand poverty as a spur because she never had experienced it, and thought only black people and poor Southern dirt farmers ever did. Beatrice wasn't there.

"I can't stay," Eliot said. "Sorry. Too much booze too early tonight, and the champagne didn't help. See you tomorrow."

To sit across from Donna all night, to watch her peer at her cards, and watch those pale fat fingers fumble... He waved to them and shook his head at their entreaties to stay at least for a while.

"Will you show me the offices tomorrow, Eliot?" Her voice was like the rest of her, just wrong, too high-pitched, little-girl cute, with the suggestion of a lisp.

He shrugged. "Sure. Eleven?"

He walked up the beach. The tide was coming in fast now, the breakers were white-frosted and insistent. In the woods behind the dunes night life stirred, an owl beat the wind steadily, a deer snorted, the grasses rustled, reviving the legend of the Spaniards who walked by night, bemoaning the abandonment of the fort they had started and left. The air was pungent with the sea smells, and the life and death smells of the miniature jungle. He walked mechanically. Whatever thoughts he had were dreamlike in that he forgot them as quickly as they formed, so that by the time he turned at the end of the island and retraced his steps along the beach, it was as if he had spent the last hour or more sleepwalking. He stopped at the pier and then walked out on it to the end where he was captain of a pirate ship braving the uncharted seas in search of unknown lands to conquer. It was flat and stupid and he let it go.

The pier was solid, a thousand feet out into the ocean; it seemed to move with the motion of the sea and the constant pressure of the

wind. Eliot leaned against the end post where a brown pelican roosted every day to watch the sea and the land, alert for subversives, immorality, unseemly behavior, including littering of the beach...

Lee Moore's house had a light; the others were all dark. Eliot wondered if they were still playing poker, if Donna Bensinger had won all their money, if Lee and Ed were singing dirty sea chanteys yet. He flicked his cigarette out into the water. Thirty, he thought, thirty. Forty thousand dollars in the bank, more every day, and no one to tell me to do this or that, to come in or stay out. Freedom and money. The dream of a sixteen-year-old washing dishes after school in a crummy diner. Buy a boat and go around the world after this is over. Or start traveling on tramps and never stop. Or—get a little place somewhere and let the money draw interest, live on the dividends forever. Or... He heard voices. Two pale figures running along the sand toward the waves. The tide had turned again. The urgency was gone. Proof, he thought, right here before our eyes day in and day out. Never changing, eternal cycles; he didn't know if he meant the tide or the couple. He looked at the nude figures. It had to be Donna, pale hair, white body. The man could have been any of them, too far up the beach to see him clearly. They ran into the surf and she shrieked, but softly, not for the world to hear. The man caught up with her and they fell together into the shallow water.

Eliot watched the laughing figures, rolling, grappling, and he felt only disgust for the girl, and the man, whoever he happened to be. Too quick. Everything about her was too quick. He started to move from the post, but there were others now coming from the dunes, running together so that it was impossible to say if there were two or three, or even four of them. The light from a crescent moon was too feeble, he couldn't make them out. Now there was a tight knot in his middle, and he felt cold. He looked down at the swells of the sea, black and hard looking here, but alive and moving, always moving. When he looked again at the beach he knew that there were six people, dancing together, running, playing. All naked, all carefree and happy now. They paired off and each couple became one being, and he turned away. Without looking again at the figures, he left the pier and hurried home. He was shivering from the constant wind on the pier.

Strange, fragmented dreams troubled his sleep. The night witch came to him and tormented his flesh while he lay unable to move, unable to respond, or refrain from responding when that pleased her. Then he was crawling up a cliff, barren and rocky, windswept and cold. He was lost and the wind carried his voice down into crevices when he tried to call for help. His hands hurt, and he knew his toes were bleeding, leaving strange trails, like the spoor of an unidentified animal. He was on a level plain, with a walking stick in his hand, weary and chattering with cold. The wind was relentless, tearing his clothes from him; the rock-strewn field that he traversed was like dry ice. He kept his eyes cast down, so he wouldn't lose the nebulous trail that he had to follow, strange reddish wavy lines, like blood from an unknown animal. He tried to use the walking stick, but each time he struck it on the boulder, he felt it attach itself, knew that it rooted and sprouted instantly, and he had to wrench it loose again.

Eliot sat on his porch drinking black coffee, a newspaper on the table ignored as he stared over the blue-green waters. The sun was hot already, the day calm, the water unruffled. Another perfect day in paradise. He frowned at the sound of light tapping on the screen door. Donna Bensinger opened it, called, "Hello, are you decent? Can I come in?"

End of sample pages



Kate Wilhelm

Kate Wilhelm's first short story, "The Pint-Sized Genie" was published in *Fantastic Stories* in 1956. Her first novel, *More Bitter Than Death*, a mystery, was published in 1963. Over the span of her career, her writing has crossed over the genres of science fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy and magical realism, psychological suspense, mimetic, comic, family sagas, a multimedia stage production, and radio plays. She has recently returned to writing mysteries with her Barbara Holloway and the Charlie Meiklejohn and Constance Leidl Mysteries novels. Her works have been adapted for television, theater, and movies in the United States, England, and Germany. Wilhelm's novels and stories have been translated to more than a dozen languages. She has contributed to *Redbook*, *Quark*, *Orbit*, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Locus*, *Amazing*, *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *Ellery Queen's Mysteries*, *Fantastic Stories*, *Omni* and many others.

Kate and her husband, Damon Knight (1922-2002), also provided invaluable assistance to numerous other writers over the years. Their teaching careers covered a span of several decades, and hundreds of students, many of whom are famous names in the field today. Kate and Damon helped to establish the Clarion Writer's Workshop and the Milford Writer's Conference. They have lectured together at universities in North and South America and Asia. They have been the guests of honor and panelists at numerous conventions around the world. Kate continues to host monthly workshops, as well as teach at other events. She is an avid supporter of local libraries.

Kate Wilhelm lives in Eugene, Oregon.