



# ROGUES' GALLERY

BY JOHN PATRICK  
SHANLEY



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**UNKNOWN CALLER**

# UNKNOWN CALLER

Where was the ring? I stared at the open box. I'd proposed, Alice turned me down, I got drunk. I remembered that much. Very drunk. Unusually drunk. Did she take the ring? After checking all my pockets and every place else I could think of, I called her. No, she didn't have it. I could tell she thought I was using the missing ring as an excuse. My proposal had been a Hail Mary pass, and the call probably struck Alice as a pathetic ploy to keep the conversation going. I hung up. It was a seventeen-thousand-dollar ring. I was doing okay, but seventeen grand was a third of my savings. I called the steak house where I'd popped the question. No. They hadn't found a ring. Had I taken a cab home? I had! I remembered saying good night to somebody in a cab, a woman, getting out, and then the cab took off with the woman still in it. I couldn't remember what the woman looked like, just that she had hoop earrings.

My phone lit up. Unknown Caller. I answered. It was her, the woman from the cab. She had my card. Her name was Angela. She asked how I was feeling. I was honest. She laughed. She had a good laugh, big, relaxed. "Do you remember everything?" she asked. I told her I didn't remember anything. That set her back, I could tell. Her voice dropped an octave. "Are you serious?" A big pause opened up. After a while, I managed to ask after the ring. Had she seen it? She didn't say anything. Finally, I blurted out, "All I remember is you were wearing hoop earrings." "That's it?" A little quake had come into her voice. My mind raced. I felt a huge wave of guilt. What had I done? Was she crying? Had I slept with her? And then I suddenly realized I was desperate to go to the bathroom, and asked if I could call her back in ten minutes. She said sure, and hung up.

I ran to the bathroom, did my business, and realized I couldn't call her back. Didn't have her number. Unknown Caller. Ten minutes came and went. She didn't call. It looked like she had my ring, and that was that. Had I slept with her? I couldn't imagine it. I started to

# ROGUES' GALLERY

by John Patrick Shanley

Ten magnetic characters. Ten bizarre, explosive, and darkly humorous stories. This collection of monologues from the imagination of Pulitzer Prize-winning John Patrick Shanley delves into the allure of bad behavior and the absurdity of being human.

**UNKNOWN CALLER.** *"Where was the ring? I stared at the open box."* After a doomed proposal and a night of heavy drinking, a would-be fiancé wakes to a hangover and a missing engagement ring. A phone call from a stranger may hold the key to its whereabouts—and an opportunity for a fresh start. (1 man.)

**DRIVE.** *"He looked at me like I was an unexpected problem, like the day had been going fine, and I ruined it."* A cabaret singer does not like the janitor at her club, and the feeling is mutual. As she struggles to find authenticity in her performances, a sudden event brings inspiration. (1 woman.)

**GAUCHO.** *"He did not realize the kind of man I was, and that he was in danger."* An aggrieved descendant of the gauchos of Argentina seeks revenge on the man who seduced his wife. (1 man.)

**ARTIFICIAL LEG.** *"Who leaves a leg?"* A homeowner struggles to dispose of the prosthetic limb he discovered in the basement of his new townhouse. (1 man.)

**DITTO.** *"I'm scared to death."* A journalist becomes infatuated with a writer, leaving her fiancé behind and diving headfirst into a blissful romance. But when a friend reaches out with an unsettling discovery, she uncovers the strange truth about her new relationship—and herself. (1 woman.)

**THE ACUPUNCTURIST.** *"She was exceptionally good at finding pain."* A patient switches acupuncturists after their practitioner starts to believe he has magical powers. (1 n/s.)

**THE CLERICAL LINE.** *"It is not enough to foresee a fashion. One must have courage."* A wealthy bachelor collaborates with Burberry to create a wardrobe of priest's clothing—a uniform he deems most reflective of his soul and status. (1 man.)

**I WAS RIGHT ABOUT EVERYTHING.** *"I'm the fascinating one. We both know that. I'm the one a movie star would want to play."* A Bronx food cart owner and teller of tall tales bides his time until the woman he loves realizes how exceptional he is. (1 man.)

**LOCKDOWN.** *"I hate him, but I can't leave the puppy."* During a global epidemic, a quarantined woman slips away from her boyfriend to call her lover. (1 woman.)

**THE CHOREOGRAPHER'S HAND.** *"The best way to get away with murder is don't talk about it, and I never have."* In this longer piece, a pianist prone to visions unravels the curious sequence of events that pushed him to kill. (1 man.)

Also by John Patrick Shanley

DOUBT, A PARABLE  
OUTSIDE MULLINGAR  
PRODIGAL SON  
and others

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