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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UNKNOWN CALLER
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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
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