

The Whole World Desperately Needs Your Funny Story

Humor Writer States His Case for Entering Funny Stories in Ageless Authors Writing Contest

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By Geoffrey K. Graves

Let me get straight to the point as to why you should write a funny story and submit it to the Ageless Authors Writing Contest between now and March 15: Your life and that of your neighbors and friends may depend on it. That may seem an exaggeration, but I don't believe it is and I will explain why.



Writing humor can save lives, really!

Every morning my wife and I take a stroll through one of our fair city's parks. Daily, we observe one of those bumper-stickers-all-over-the-back-of-my-car fellows who for years has been holding unique early morning sessions in which a small group gathers in a circle and simply laughs. Sometimes they jump up and down and laugh. Sometimes they sound like they've lost their minds, laughing. They're not telling jokes or funny stories, they just laugh. Frankly, it seems peculiar to me. The leader of that group calls it laughter therapy.

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I will admit to making occasional snide remarks about the whole thing. I love to laugh as much as the next guy, but when I laugh there is usually reason for it. I love to write things I think are humorous, too. I particularly love to sit in

a theatre when an entire audience is together roaring with laughter, enjoying a good comedy. I love when a book makes me laugh out loud. I like a good joke, too. I believe most people love to laugh. (Why do I suddenly sound like Andy Rooney, the late 60 Minutes humorist?).

That fellow in the park may be onto something. A great laugh can de-stress your muscles for up to 45 minutes, reduce stress hormones and boost your immune system, improving your resistance to disease. Ah-ha-ha-ha! If the power to effect your fellow humans isn't reason enough to write a humorous story, I don't know what is.

Yet it is the serious and the tragic that get all the attention in the literary and visual arts today. Consider the Oscars. Funny movies never win. The last five best picture honorees were "The Shape of Water," "Moonlight," "Spotlight," "Birdman," and "12 Years a Slave," none of which you'd call laughathons. There are nearly a thousand short story literary journals open to submissions by amateur and professional writers alike.

Not five among them lists humorous stories as a genre the editorial staff would consider publishing. Comedy? Oh, no, we are only interested in serious, downer, suffering, suicidal, alcoholic, pill popping, end-of-the-world tales that leave you wondering why you should even get up in the morning. You will find this down-the-nose attitude toward comedy especially true of journals compiled by colleges and universities.

Think I exaggerate? Here's a summarized sampling of one recent higher education institution journal's fictional offerings, and believe me it's typical: A story about birds ripping other birds apart to feed their young; A story that starts with a guy on a ventilator; A story about a girl run who is over by a jet ski and drowns; A story about a different girl whose mother shoots herself. Those are the lighter, more upbeat fiction tales in that publication. In those rare journals that include humor, it is almost always specified to be non-fiction humor, as if no one writes fictional humor. I wish someone would explain that to me.

The worst class I had in university was something called "Literary Comedy Through the Ages." The professor was the least humorous, most boring teacher of my college years. I would have learned more about humor from an Elmer Fudd cartoon.

Why is this? Why is the writing of comedy rarely if ever taught or encouraged in our schools? I think it's because humor is one of the most difficult things to write and most teachers don't know how to do it. Some people are just not funny and don't or can't "think funny." Others seem to be born funny. I can't tell you how a person becomes funny or knows how to write funny things. I don't think anyone knows that really. There are theories, usually something about a difficult childhood is pointed to, but I don't think that's necessarily it.

If this teaches us anything, it is that more humor writers are needed because people want to read their work. People want to be amused. I find it a joy to watch someone read something I've

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Geoff Graves is an award-winning humor writer.

written that makes them laugh. It is one of my greatest pleasures. Stand-up comedians live for that thrill.

If you feel inclined to write funny stuff, you are a rarity. That odd tingle in your funny bone is telling you to heed the wild call for submissions to the humor category of the 2019 Ageless Authors Writing Contest. Trust me, I know what a rare opportunity this is. I've submitted stories I know are solid comedic tales of both fiction and non-fiction with alluring characters (typically, a very handsome writer among them) and intriguing plotlines to a number of literary journals, and get comments back from editors like, I really enjoyed your story but it doesn't fit what we publish in our journal. Really? Why not?

The ancients knew the value of comedy. The Greeks staged comedies one night, tragedies the next. We live in serious times. Downer communications bombard us daily. For the sake of our health, we humans need to laugh. So help us all reduce our stressed muscles and stress hormones, boost our immune systems and improve our resistance to disease. If you've got a humorous short story or two kicking around in your gregariously giggling gray matter, give it a go.

Ageless Authors accepts submissions from authors 65 years of age and older, and something funny has to have happened to you at least once during all those years! Write it up, go to agelessauthors.com/current-contests/ and make your submission.

With this one selfless act, you just may save the entire human race.

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