



## Tooth and Claw: and Other Stories

By T.C. Boyle

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Since *Descent of Man* appeared in 1979, T. C. Boyle has transformed the nature of short fiction in our time; in a review of his most recent collection, *After the Plague*, *The New York Times* hailed him as "a writer who can take you anywhere." Which is exactly what Boyle does in *Tooth and Claw*.

These fourteen stories, which have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *GQ*, *Harper's*, *McSweeney's*, and *Playboy*, display Boyle's imaginative muscle, emotional sensitivity, and astonishing range. Here you will find the whimsical tales for which Boyle is famous, including "The Kind Assassin," about a radio shock jock who sets the world record for most continuous hours without sleep. Readers will love the comedic drama of the title story, about a man who must contend with a vicious cat from Africa that he has won in a bet. And who could resist the gripping power of "Dogology," about a woman who becomes so obsessed with man's best friend that she begins to lose her own identity to a pack of strays. Boyle here proves once again that he is "a writer who can take any topic and spin a yarn too good to put down" (*Men's Journal*).

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## Tooth and Claw: and Other Stories By T.C. Boyle Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. The threat of imminent demise—whether self-inflicted or from an ungentle Mother Nature—hovers in Boyle's seventh collection (after the novel *The Inner Circle*). Ravenous alligators make a memorable cameo in "Jubilation," in which a divorced man seeking community and stability moves into a "model" town erected in a Florida theme park (think Disney's Celebration), only to find that benign surfaces conceal dangerous depths. This theme of civilization versus wilderness also underpins the weird and wonderful "Dogology," in which a young woman's frustration with the accoutrements of the human world compels her to run—on all fours—with a pack of neighborhood dogs. "Here Comes"—one of the collection's more realistic pieces—describes the anxious circumstances of a suddenly homeless alcoholic poised to slip through the cracks for good in a Southern California town. Substance abuse figures again in "Up Against the Wall," about a young man seduced by a dissolute new crowd, while his parents' marital discord and the Vietnam War tug at the edges of his drugged-out awareness. The wired rhythm of Boyle's prose and the enormity of his imagination make this collection irresistible; with it he continues to shore up his place as one of the most distinctive, funniest—and finest—writers around. (*On sale Sept. 12*)

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Boyle—beloved author of *The Inner Circle* and *Drop City*—is a masterful prose stylist. This volume showcases his skill, hurling such wonderful phrases as "face that was like a dried-up field plowed in both directions" at the reader. But the reviews of this collection were mixed, suggesting that Boyle is a bit too enamored of his own wordsmithing. A few critics claimed that he was so busy making it rococo and perfect that he failed to develop characters that readers care about. Still, the collection is clever, creative, and inventive in the dialectic it poses between nature and civilization and will engage and even delight all but the most finicky readers.

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From [Booklist](#)

Boyle's imagination is protean, and his prose transporting. The author of 10 potent novels and counting, Boyle is also a virtuoso short story writer, and he has never been more enrapturing than in his seventh collection of shrewd and comic tales. He orchestrates suspenseful, ludicrous, and wrenching predicaments, and his evocation of visceral detail, great gift for supple social commentary, and ability to occupy the psyches of his perplexed male characters are extraordinary. As the title suggests, Boyle focuses on nature, long the central concern in his work, specifically the conflict between civilization and wildness. Even as humankind forces other species into extinction, we remain at the mercy of nature. So how does this struggle for survival play out in Boyle's hectic cosmos? In the title story, a hapless guy wins a serval, a wildcat from Africa, in a bar bet, and it's hard to tell who is more miserable cooped up in a crummy apartment, man or beast. In "Dogology," a woman literally goes to the dogs in Connecticut, while in India a reverend attempts to reclaim two young girls raised by a wolf. In other tales, a couple is stranded in a blizzard, nature wreaks havoc on a planned community in Florida, and the threat of earth-smashing meteors pales in comparison to the dangers teenagers court. Boyle's visions of our perverse attempts to defy and deny nature are darkly humorous and wisely trenchant, brilliantly highlighting our unlikely, yet, so far, effective survival instincts: hubris and obliviousness. *Donna Seaman*

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#### **Angela Souther:**

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