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Review of the Best American Short Stories, 2008 edited by Heidi Pitlor and Slaman Rushdie

Kevin Clouther

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The Best American Short Stories, 2008.
Ed. by Salman Rushdie and Heidi Pitlor.

Oct. 2008. 384p. Houghton, \$28 (9780618788767); paper, \$14 (9780618788774).

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year's best stories, however, come from smaller journals. Kevin Brockmeier's "The Year of Silence," first published in the little-known journal *Ecotone*, outlines a community's response to an enigmatic repeating silence; in a narrative decision Borges would admire, the story actually requires Morse code. But Katie Chase's "Man and Wife," first published in the *Missouri Review*, is 2008's surprise gem. The story imagines a contemporary American childhood through the vantage of a girl sent into an arranged marriage. In a particularly disturbing scene, echoed in the story's ending, she plays with dolls before her future husband: "I tilted Barbie's head and pressed her face against Ken's, as if they were kissing, and laid them back atop the Kleenex box. Mr. Middleton watched with his detached interest." —Kevin Clouther

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