

Readers' Favorite Review by Grant Leishman

Review Rating: 5 Stars

The *Inquisition and Other Stories* is a mixed collection of short stories from author Michael Tabor that, although having no fixed theme, are subtly linked through the clever use of different literary devices. Each story is very different but all have twists or similar aspects that the reader will not see coming. The subjects are as varied as the time frames. The first tale, *Catherine Lescault*, takes the reader back to seventeenth-century France and examines the lives, loves, and perversions of the famous painters of that time. *Exodus* is a compelling story about the escape from Nazi Germany to Australia told through the eyes of a young Jewish girl and how that experience would affect the entire course of her life and her perceptions. *Belle Lettres: A Novel* examines the correspondence between an innocent young woman and her secret admirer, as the admirer's ardor becomes more obvious and potentially dangerous. *Blue Guitar* looks at and mocks, to some extent, the pretentiousness of those who inhabit the art world and its rarefied atmospheres. The title story, *The Inquisition*, is a fascinating comparison between a playwright who is diagnosed with cancer and the character in the current play he is writing; a man being interrogated by the Russian OGPU, Stalin's powerful and vicious secret police force, the forerunner to the KGB. Those are just five examples of the thirteen wonderful stories that make up this collection.

I have never been a big consumer of short stories and approached reviewing *The Inquisition and Other Stories* with some trepidation. I need not have worried. Author Michael Tabor has produced a collection that simply has no weak links. Every story has a clear, definitive message that the author is offering and although necessarily character development is minimal, he is able to create some unique characterizations that just jump off the pages and keep the reader fully engaged and quickly rushing onto the next story in the collection. That and the use of different literary techniques and devices mean that no story is similar in any way to another and, most importantly, the reader is continually kept guessing about the plot, the motivation, and the ultimate disposition of the story. In any collection, a reader will have his or her favorites and I am no exception in that regard, although each is superb and unique in its own way. For me, my favorite story was *Steve*, an appealing tale of a shy young man who had been through the foster-care system, and his sole ambition, as an adult was just to fit in, be normal, and to be accepted by his peers. The awakening of Steve as a man and as a social being was a joy to read. What I particularly loved about this story was the portion dealing with the perception of Steve by all the characters he meets on his journey to fulfillment. This is a truly wonderful collection and can be enjoyed by anyone, short story fan or not. I can highly recommend this read.