



First Thrills

Lee Child (Editor) , Gregg Hurwitz , Michael Palmer , Grant McKenzie , John Lescroart , Bill Cameron , Stephen Coonts , Ryan Brown , more... Sean Michael Bailey , Heather Graham , Rebecca Cantrell , Kelli Stanley , C.J. Lyons , Wendy Corsi Staub , J.T. Ellison , Marc Paoletti , Karin Slaughter , Karen Dionne , Steve Berry (Afterword) , Rip Gerber , Alex Kava , Ken Bruen , Theo Gangi , Jeffery Deaver , John Lutz , Cynthia Robinson ...less

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New York Times bestselling author Lee Child and International Thriller Writers, Inc., present a collection of remarkable stories in First Thrills. Showcasing many of the organization's bestselling authors as well as rising stars in the genre, here are twenty-five brand-new, never-before-published stories packed with murder, mystery, and mayhem.

- A cunning criminal thinks he can use a child to take the rap for his crimes.
- A hospital intern turned body snatcher
- A priest who comes face-to-face with his wife's murderer on death row
- A Confederate soldier comes home to his love, but changed by more than just the war . . . he comes back wrong.
- The discovery of a flying saucer in the ocean depths brings one man to the brink of a massive revelation.
- A dying man's last request proves to his ex-wife that he's still rotten to the core.
- A clandestine operative finds himself caught in a wicked game of confusion . . . but who is calling the shots?

No matter what type of thriller you listen to, you'll find something here that will entertain you . . . and perhaps a new writer you'll cherish for years to come.

First Thrills Details

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From Reader Review First Thrills for online ebook

Quintin Zimmermann says

The idea behind First Thrills was to showcase new talent in the thriller genre and use the internationally recognised authors to attract the readership.

Six years after First Thrills was first published, the bestselling authors continue to be successful, but sadly none of the featured rookie authors have really gone on to better things.

There were some great stories - The Thief by Gregg Hurwitz and The Dead Club by Michael Palmer stand out. But there were just too many mediocre stories that didn't thrill.

Patty Marvel says

Run, do not walk, to your nearest library or book store or computer with Amazon.com fired up AND GET THIS!!!! This is a collection of twenty-five short stories in the "thriller" genre, about eleven of which are by well-established writers you've heard of and the remaining fourteen are by relative newcomers. That's the point according to Lee Child, who acts as editor and contributor - to have just enough goodies by people you know so you buy the book and read stuff by the new kids. Added bonus if you get the audio book version, which has almost as many talented readers as there are stories.

WAY more "hits" than "misses" in this book. I'll rate the stories individually, using five stars as the maximum rating, and scores were determined partly by how well I could see the ending coming.

1. "The Thief" by Gregg Hurwitz - STRONG start to the collection with a story told by the POV of a developmentally challenged teenage boy. Five very enthusiastic stars.
2. "Scutwork" by C.J. Lyons - A naughty night with a goth chick goes terribly wrong for the guy in charge of the corpses. Four stars.
3. "The Bodyguard" by Lee Child - A professional bodyguard has to reconsider his career choice. Four stars.
4. "Last Supper" by Rip Gerber - How to handle being face-to-face with your wife's killer. 3.5 stars.
5. "After Dark" by Alex Kava and Deb Carlin - Woman goes to a camp ground by herself at night and, well, you can kinda see the ending coming. 2.0
6. "Wednesday's Child" by Ken Bruen - A double-cross set in Ireland with an ending I did NOT see coming. 5.0
7. "Eddy May" by Theo Gangi - Creepy scam artist gets a double-cross. 4.0
8. "The Plot" by Jeffery Deaver - A detective's instincts about a writer's death prove not all is what it seems (with the most "I did NOT see that coming" ending in the collection). 5.0

9. "Eye of the Storm" by John Lutz and Lise S. Barker - A woman's plans to dispose of her unfaithful husband distracts her so much she doesn't notice the hurricane coming her way. 4.0

10. "The Dead Club" by Michael Palmer and Daniel James - A doctor takes a gamble on a high-steaks game in Las Vegas. 5.0

11. "Underbelly" by Grant McKenzie - A very funny story involving a moving bus, some stashed contraband and little people with guns. 5.0

12. "The Gato Conundrum" by John Lescroat - Lame "Da Vinci Code" rip-off. 1.0

13. "The Princess of Felony Flats" by Bill Cameron - Scam involving a crime family set in modern Ireland. 5.0

14. "Savage Planet" by Stephen Coonts - A recovered ship means something special to one person. 4.0

15. "Suspended" by Ryan Brown - The plot to "Frozen" with a pissed-off ghost. 3.0

16. "Invisible" by Sean Michael Bailey - This story about a person with an ugly childhood, an even uglier adulthood and a special power may be more sci-fi than thriller. 4.0

17. "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" by Heather Graham - A small island community has survived the Civil War, but now they must deal with a new horror. Five very enthusiastic stars.

18. "On the Train" by Rebecca Cantrell - Two men have a heart-to-heart chat on the train during the Holocaust. 5.0

19. "Children's Day" by Kelli Stanley - A child disappears with a clown in 1939 in this tale reminding us that the good ole days weren't always good. 5.0

20. "My Father's Eyes" by Wendi Corsi Staub - A familiar story told from the main character's perspective (see if you can guess who it is before you get to the end). 5.0

21. "Program with a Happy Ending" by Cynthia Robinson - Probably based on a true story, we see what could go wrong when you alienate people. 4.0

22. "Killing Carol Ann" by J.T. Ellison - With friends like this, who needs enemies? 5.0

23. "Cloe" by Marc Paoletti - What life is like when a Wise Guy is an old guy. 3.0

24. "Cold, Cold Heart" by Karin Slaughter - The jilted ex-wife of a narcissistic self-help guru isn't as helpless as she seems (features another "I did NOT see that coming" ending). 4.0

25. "Calling the Shots" by Karen Dionne - Never piss off your boss' daughter. 2.0

Tim says

This anthology contains the writings of 12 bestsellers with 13 new writers, all of whom are associated with the International Thriller Writers, Inc. organization.

Although quick reads for the most part, several of these short stories are rather pedestrian and predictable for anyone who reads widely. Unfortunately, Editor Lee Child's "The Bodyguard" is among these: good fast-paced action with a weak ending. But balancing this assembly is Marc Paoletti's "Chloe," which is not a tale for the squeamish: the son of a wise guy thought his life as a lawyer was shitty, until he needed to help his father on the crapper.

The 25-story collection starts with a humorous bang under Greg Hurwitz's "The Thief." The boyish POV kept reminding me of William Faulkner's technique in novels such as *As I Lay Dying*. The narrator's thoughts and comments fit a young boy; however, the ending twist seems a bit misplaced since a true money-grubbing scoundrel would hardly forget his own wallet. Nevertheless, another first-person POV that doesn't work as well is J.T. Ellison's "Killing Carol Ann." The narration and motivation for murder are muddled.

To fuel an historical interest: Heather Graham's "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," is a twisted tale about how the South will rise again—without arms. "My Father's Eyes" by Wendy Corsi Staub is a delicious reunion with a Massachusetts axe murderer. And, a San Francisco carnival in the 1930s jumps to life in Kelli Stanley's rendering of "Children's Day."

Riding on literary coattails: A vengeful ghost á la Jacob Marley appears in Ryan Brown's "Suspended." Here, both the protagonist and the reader are left hanging. Rebecca Cantrell's "On the Train" smacks of "Waiting for Godot" aboard a Nazi extermination train, although this story has a gay ending. And, the Montagues and Capulets are alive and feuding in Michigan's UP as Swedes and Finns in Karen Dionne's "Calling the Shots." Very funny, ainna?

The book features short author bios and web addresses for aficionados who might find a writer particularly thrilling to pursue. On the other hand, the insertions could be the publisher suggesting that if a high-octane story runs out of gas, try another one by this writer.

Melenia says

I picked up this audio book because I loved the book "FaceOff" and I wanted to read more like it. Unfortunately, this book did not live up to my expectations. The audio was pretty good. I only skipped one book because of the audio which is pretty good for how many different people they have doing it.

I averaged my ratings out to just under a two star and decided it was decent enough to bump it up. Some people might enjoy this book much more than I did, I just found the super short stories did not work for me for the most part.

Below are my individual reviews:

- 1) These are REALLY short stories but "The Thief" by Gregg Hurwitz was a 5 star read.
- 2) Scutwork" by CJ Lyons -- 3 stars
- 3) The Bodyguard" by Lee Child -- I love Lee Child's Reacher books and this was not one of them and just fell flat for me :(-- 2 stars

- 4) Last Supper" by Rip Gerber -- 2 stars
- 5) After Dark" by Alex Kava with Deb Carlin -- 4 Stars (not a fan of these super short stories)
- 6) Wednesday's Child" by Ken Bruen -- 3 stars
- 7) Eddy May" by Theo Gangi -- 3 stars
- 8) The Plot" by Jeffery Deaver -- 5 stars
- 9) DNF -- "Eye of the Storm" by John Lutz with Lisa S. Baker -- DNF the story might have been good, but I could not handle the audio at all :(
- 10) The Dead Club" by Michael Palmer with Daniel James Palmer -- 4 stars
- 11) Underbelly" by Grant McKenzie -- 2 stars
- 12) DNF – "The Gato Conundrum" by John Lescroart
- 13) DNF – "The Princess of Felony Flats" by Bill Cameron
- 14) DNF – "Savage Planet" by Stephen Coonts
- 15) DNF – "Suspended" by Ryan Brown
- 16) "Invisible" by Sean Michael Bailey -- 1 star -- I listened to it, but didn't understand any of it.
- 17) DNF – "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" by Heather Graham
- 18) "On the Train" by Rebecca Cantrell – 2 Stars – Decent
- 19) "Children's Day" by Kelli Stanley – 4 stars – Better
- 20) "My Father's Eyes" by Wendy Corsi Staub -- 3 stars
- 21) "Program with a Happy Ending" by Cynthia Robinson -- 2 stars
- 22) "Killing Carol Ann" by J.T. Ellison -- 1 star
- 23) "Chloe" by Marc Paoletti -- 2 stars
- 24) "Cold, Cold Heart" by Karin Slaughter -- 1 star
- 25) DNF – "Calling the Shots" by Karen Dionne

Shaun says

If you like Lee Child stories, this is a book of short stories along the vein of Lee Child. I found most of the stories interesting and I'll most likely check out many of the short story authors other best selling books.

Craig S. says

It's hard to build a "thriller" in just a few pages without going overboard or getting too quickly into the action. To their credit, all the authors in this collection do it. Highly recommended.

Saritha says

While they were all good stories, I didn't particularly care for the UFO one or the zombie one. I particularly loved Rebecca Cantrell's On the Train and Grant McKenzie's Underbelly.

The book has achieved its purpose of introducing through a story, authors that a reader may not ever come across. I will look out for McKenzie and Cantrell now.

Lori Mills says

I have not finished this book yet, but have read several of the short stories. I am really liking it. They are short and written by the best thriller writers. The stories are reminiscent of the Twilight Zone stories on TV years ago.

Midnight Blue says

This is a great anthology; in content, and in the very purpose of it. Lee Child has collected stories by well-known and successful writers and writers who are just getting started in the Thriller genre. The stories were all good, some were great, and there was even a Civil War era zombie story (every anthology should have a zombie story). I highly recommend this book!

Wade says

I looked forward to this book, and was mostly happy with the short stories. I'm going to trust that the compiler/editor has a better sense of the genre than I, so I won't rate any story less than a "3". I figure 1 & 2 ratings didn't make muster with them. I obtained an average for the overall rating. Here's my rubric:

- 3 - not my cup of tea; never grabbed me.
- 4 - pretty good stuff; good story.
- 5 - amazing...I didn't want the story to end.

- 4 - The Thief, by Gregg Hurwitz
- 5 - Scutwork, by CJ Lyons
- 4 - The Bodyguard, by Lee Child
- 5 - Last Supper, by Rip Gerber
- 4 - After Dark, by Alexa Kava & Deb Carlin
- 3 - Wednesday's Child, by Ken Bruen
- 4 - Eddy May, by Theo Gangi
- 3 - The Plot, by Jeffery Deaver
- 4 - Eye of the Storm, by John Lutz & Lise Baker
- 5 - The Dead Club, by Michael Palmer & Daniel James Palmer
- 4 - Underbelly, by Grant McKenzie
- 4 - The Gato Conundrum, by John Lescroart
- 3 - The Princess of Felony Flats, by Bill Cameron
- 5 - Savage Planet, by Stephen Coonts
- 5 - Suspended, by Ryan Brown
- 3 - Invisible, by Sean Michael Bailey
- 5 - When Johnny Comes Marching Home, by Heather Graham
- 4 - On the Train, by Rebecca Cantrell
- 4 - Children's Day, by Kelli Stanley
- 3 - My Father's Eyes, by Wendy Corsi Staub

- 4 - Program with a Happy Ending, by Cynthia Robinson
- 4 - Killing Carol Ann, by J. T. Ellison
- 4 - Chloe, by Marc Paoletti
- 5 - Cold, Cold Heart, by Karin Slaughter
- 3 - Calling the Shots, by Karen Dionne

Lisa says

I'm not usually a short story fan but I did really enjoy this collection.

Lured in by Lee Child (I love Reacher - his story is not a Reacher one though - boo) I thought the stories were varied and compelling.

Usually I find short stories difficult because I prefer a slightly slower pace and getting to know everyone but actually the style of these stories sped up the getting know you phase immeasurably!

They were all quick-witted and exciting and got under my skin - this was a winner for me.

Yay, I CAN do short stories!

Linda Munro says

I normally stray from anthologies, but suddenly I am finding that this is the way to introduce myself to new writers. I find myself in a less likely mode to purchase anthologies simply due to the fact that short stories lack detail and without detail, they mainly fall flat. Most of the stories in this anthology did not fall flat, yet each of them can easily be expanded upon to make either a novel or novella. This anthology contains twenty-five short stories, each will make the reader eager to learn more. Overall, an excellant choice, especially for those who have limited reading time.

William says

A mixed bag of work. Some quite good, some silly and clichéd

- The Thief 4/5
- Scutwork 4/5
- The Bodyguard 5/5
- Last Supper 5/5 extraordinary

Over forty varieties of mushrooms and one hundred cooking terms are mentioned in this story
Smith & Wesson Model 60 Double Action revolver

[Full size image here](#)

- After Dark 3/5
- Wednesday's Child 4/5 great fun
SIG Sauer

[Full size image here](#)

- Eddy May 3/5 Too much baseball, too much blather
- The Plot 2/5 thin prose, clichéd plot
- Eye of the Storm 3/5 no surprises
- The Dead Club 1/5 lots of medical blather, obvious plot, tiny payoff
- Underbelly 1/5 cutesy, cute, silly
- The Gato Conundrum 0/5
Omg this is truly awful stuff. Just proves anyone can get published irrespective of talent.
as a youth, he'd been trained by traveling gypsies in the arcane art of lock picking,
- The Princess of Felony Flats 0/5
- Savage Planet 0/5
- Suspended 1/5
- Invisible 1/5
- When Johnny Comes Marching Home 3/5 zombies in the old South
- On the Train 4/5. A short prelude to the brutality of obscene Nazi broken egos.
- Children's Day, 4/5. Nice prose style, clipped, almost stream of consciousness. Nice.
- Program with a Happy Ending, 3/5. A familiar story, well-told.
- Killing Carol Anne, 3/5. Interesting
- Chloe, 2/5. Dark but unsubstantial
- Cold, Cold Heart, 4/5. Well written by Karen Slaughter, not terribly violent
- Calling the Shots 3/5, nice twist at the end

Mark Soone says

I gave it 3 stars, but my average was 2.76 which is about where I would rank it for me..just below 3, but certainly above 2. There are some very good stories in this collection and I guess those alone warrant a 3 star rating, but the second half of this collection really lagged on excitement IMHO. For me the first story by Hurwitz remains the highlight of the collection.

01 The Thief by Gregg Hurwitz- 5 stars

Other than reading a short story by Hurwitz in another ITW inc. anthology, I am not familiar with him...and I cannot remember how I rated his other story, and am much to lazy to research that answer at the minute....perhaps later! This was brilliantly done, and is one of the most original short story thrillers I have read in some time. Told from the perspective of a mentally challenged young man (I don't enjoy the terms handicapped or retard, which are sprinkled throughout the story...although I understand the context)...simply brilliant IMHO!

02 Scutwork by C.J. Lyons- 4 stars

Never heard of Lyons to my knowledge??? This was a very enjoyable short story..I thought it was going down a path of necrophelia, and was greatly relieved that it moved quickly into another direction. Good story.

03 The Bodyguard by Lee Child- 3.5 stars

I have heard of Child prior to this, and after trying a couple full length novels I did not connect with him. I was not expecting good things....perhaps this opens up the door for me to give him another chance. This was not great, but certainly entertained me.

04 The Last Supper by Rip Gerber- 2 stars

I have never heard of Gerber, and am not acquainted with any of his work. I just never really got into this story from the start, and it never picked up momentum to draw me back in.

05 After Dark by Alex Kava w/ Deb Carlin 4.5 stars

I have not heard of Carlin, and have only come across Kava in another ITW inc. anthology (again I cannot remember how I rated her story there? and remain to lazy to check ;D). I loved this story and found myself sitting at the edge of my seat. I was totally drawn into this story...The ending was not quite as good as the rest of the story, so I dropped from a 5 to a 4.5...but this was very entertaining for me.

06 Wednesday's Child by Ken Bruen- 4 stars

I have not come across Bruen, nor heard of him until this collection. This story was very good. I found myself not expecting very much, but quickly got sucked in. A kidnapping, a double cross and revenge....think quickly and better hope you are right!

07 Eddy May by Theo Gangi- 2 stars

Never heard of Gangi prior to this. I just couldn't get into this story at all. About the only thing I enjoyed was agreeing that New York is filled with bums...Sorry, but I hate NY, and liked this story only slightly more.

08 The Plot by Jeffery Deaver- 3 stars

Deaver has become quite a proficient and entertaining short story writer (check out Thriller & Thriller II, if you are a fan of suspense short stories). This was a decent story, but not among Deaver's finer short stories by any stretch. A decent enough plot, with a solid group of characters..yet, did not really have what I call suspense...a decent mystery perhaps, but not necessarily a thriller.

09 Eye of the Storm by John Lutz w/ Lise S. Baker- 3 stars

I have heard of Lutz but am not familiar with any of his work, Baker I have never heard of previously. This is a decent story, with an age old plot. An unfaithful spouse, a jilted lover, a broken heart, revenge, covering your tracks and of course nothing works out like planned.

10 The Dead Club by Michael Palmer w/ Daniel James Palmer- 4 stars

I love just about everything Michael Palmer does, and this is no exception. I have read another short story of

his in another ITW inc. book, and his short stories are top notch as well. This is a cool spin on gambling, bad luck, keep trying...how far will you go!

11 Underbelly by Grant McKenzie- 2.5 stars

A decent little heist mystery thriller...This had IMHO a very intriguing and creative, original plot but the story never seemed to reach the potential that I initially felt.

12 The Gato Conundrum by John Lescroart- 3 stars

I have read a few of Lescroart's books and short stories and have enjoyed most...none have really blown me away to make him must read for me. although I do like Dismas Hardy and prefer his legal thrillers over his efforts. This was a decent, but not explosive, story of lust and espionage.

13. The Princess Of Felony Flats by Bill Cameron- 1.5 stars

I have never heard of Cameron, and was not inspired to rectify that in the near future (although many authors authors I like do not necessarily write great short stories as well for some reason)...I just never got drawn in out of the gate (almost a must in a short story), and momentum never seemed to draw me in much deeper the remainder of the way...Oh well.

14 Savage Planet by Stephen Coonts- 2 stars

I have read a few Coonts books, and they have been hit or miss for me. This is my first experience w/ a short story by him and for me it was a miss. I am not really into sci-fi, and this was more sci-fi than I care for.

15 Suspended by Ryan Brown- 4 stars

I have never heard of Brown before, but after this I am interested. This was a cool ghost story of jealousy, revenge and maybe even hope or false hope..Very worthwhile.

16 Invisible by Sean Michael Bailey- 3 stars

Never heard of Bailey, prior to this. This was decent and very short/quick story even by short story standards. An interesting take, on escaping abuse.

17 When Johnny Comes Marching Home by Heather graham- 2 stars

I have liked a lot of Grahams stuff, even other short stories...this was not one of my favorites of hers.

18 On The Train by Rebecca Cantrell- 3 stars

I have never heard of cantrell, but found this interesting. I have always been a big WWII fiction reader, and enjoyed this spin. A very interesting take, on the death camp trains, and ones desire for both life and freedom, made more difficult by the understanding that you likely can't have both...or that one may cost you the other!

19 Children's Day by Kelli Stanley- 2 stars

I have never heard of Stanley prior to this reading. I just could not get into this story.

20 My Father's Eyes by Wendy Corsi Staub- 2 stars

I don't know if I am in a rut, or if this book hits??? I have never heard of staub, and could not get into this story at all.

21 Program With A Happy Ending by Cynthia Robinson- 3 stars

I have never heard of Robinson prior to this. I guess it was a decent story with quite a happy ending (Not that the ending was good?! ;D), that gives a whole new meaning to the word.

22 Killing Carol Ann by J.T. Ellison- 2 stars

Perhaps a generous 2 stars? I am not familiar with Ellison and never got into this story from the start..It was almost a chore to finnish.

23 Chloe by Marc Paoletti- 2 stars

Oh my I hope this book starts getting better...It started out well (Not this story), and has hit almost a grinding halt of thrills or entertaining shorts...when sticking a pen up your fathers rectum becomes the highlight of a story, we have a ways to go!

24 Cold, Cold Heart by Karin Slaughter- 3 stars

I have read some of Karin's stuff befor and have enjoyed most of what I have read. I did not enjoy this quite as much. It started very slow and continued slow and methodical throughout. Finally climaxing in a decent end. Not a whole lot of action or speed, but a decent tale of betrayal, hurt and revenge.

25 Calling The Shots by Karen Dionne- 2 stars

A quick read and although the ending of the story was a nice twist the rest didnot really capture me.

Dwayne Keller says

Very enjoyable; a nice collection of stories and every one a winner.
