

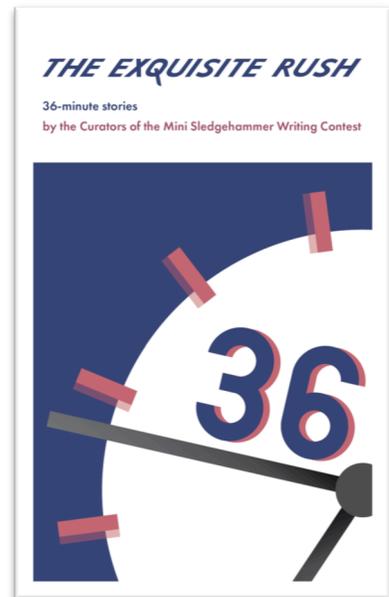
## Monthly Portland Writing Contest Publishes First Anthology

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(Portland, OR): *The Exquisite Rush*, a unique short story anthology, is hitting bookshelves this spring. The collection includes 36 stories that have each been written in only 36 minutes as part of the Mini Sledgehammer 36-Minute Writing Contest, which has been occurring monthly since 2009. The contest originated with Ali Shaw, executive editor and founder of Indigo: Editing, Design, and More, who developed Mini Sledgehammer to bring writers together and shatter writer's block. "At Indigo, community is one of our core values, so we're always looking for ways we can provide opportunities for writers to connect, have fun and improve their craft," Shaw says. "A monthly writing contest is a really fun way to do all that."



Shaw's original goal has been a success. The competition has formed a tight community of writers who are the driving force behind the collection's publication. Contest regular and anthology organizer Jeremy Da Rosa describes the Mini Sledgehammer experience as "kind of a contest, but it's more of a support group and a reason to drink wine with people who are seriously trying to better themselves in the same way I am. It's inspiring and intoxicating."

Some of the stories you will find inside include a special thrift store where shoppers can buy past experiences, a married couple who decide to meet at the site of a past tragic event to make one final decision, and a man with a terror of flying who enlists a life coach, a couples counselor, a hypnotist and even a flight simulator.

Writing a short story in just 36 minutes sounds like a daunting task, but Mini Sledgehammer regulars describe it as an exhilarating sprint. "The adrenaline keeps me coming back," says Turner Masland, who has two stories included in the book. "At the start of each competition I have no idea what I am going to write. But the forced time constraint puts you into a trance and the story seems to be pulled out of you." Local writer Laurel Smith Rogers says, "From my first visit to Mini Sledgehammer, I was struck by the quality of writing such a varied group can create in only 36 minutes, myself included."

Sarah Farnham describes the anthology as "a celebration of the many stories, writers, and experiences Mini Sledgehammer has fostered over the last eight years. Mini Sledgehammer is much more than a writing exercise—it has enriched and encouraged us to become better, stronger, and to go grab those writer dreams." Da Rosa describes the collection as "a recognition of the consistent level of writing talent coming through the monthly contest."

Pre-orders for both the paperback edition and the ebook version are available at [IndieGoGo](https://www.indiegogo.com) starting December 1, 2017. The official launch party will be held at 6pm on March 6, 2018 at Blackbird Wineshop (4323 NE Fremont), which also serves as the location of the competition every second Tuesday of the month. The launch party will feature many of the featured writers and is free and open to the public. More information about the book and contest is available at [www.sledgehammercontest.com](http://www.sledgehammercontest.com).