

## **Family Reunion: And Other Stories**

Berry Fleming

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Bob Otis, an unmarketable author who is just starting his own publishing company in order to get his latest novels in print, is abruptly sidetracked when a relative, so distant that Otis doesn't even place him, phones from Chicago with a request: his father, who has just died, wishes to be buried in the family plot in a small town in Georgia.

This call leads to another wonderful comedy of manners as Otis, whose Southern sense of obligations won't permit him to totally avoid this undertaking, is reluctantly sucked into a family reunion at the burial site: a burial attended by a cast of wonderfully eccentric characters who also have no knowledge of the deceased.

This novella is a direct descendant of Fleming's earlier comic novels: *Colonel Effingham's Raid*, *Lucinderella*, and *Captain Bennett's Folly*. Indeed, many of the zany, colorful, and irreverent characters of *Lucinderella* and *Captain Bennett* make their reappearances here, as does his fictional town of Fredericksville.

In many ways, this novel is reminiscent of Federico Fellini's film classic 8 1/2, where the Italian director is surrounded by the characters in his life and in his films. Fleming (who was also forced to self-publish his books during his decades of anonymity) brings to life his roots and his creations with a fine mixture of satire, reflection, and nostalgia.

In addition to *Family Reunion* are some fine examples of the author's gift for short fiction: pieces that touch the heart, the funny bone, and the imagination.



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