



Video: Stories

Meera Nair

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The ten exquisitely crafted stories in *Video* introduce a gifted new writer whose straight-forward, elegant prose and bewitching storytelling talent combine in brilliant miniatures of contemporary Indian life.

In the title story, an Indian man's chance exposure to a Western-style porn film affects not only his marriage—his wife hides for hours, then days, then weeks at a time from his renewed desire—but also his neighborhood, as traditional notions of marriage, intimacy, and propriety confront the unspeakable, and the tacitly alluring. In “The Sculptor of Sands,” a superbly imagined mystical tale with the depth and resonance of legend, a slight young man's sensuous sand sculptures transfix a seaside community and, despite their evanescence, leave an indelible impression on the women of the town. In “My Grandfather Dreams of Fences,” an aging landlord, convinced that his worker is stealing his land, desperately clings to the vestiges of a rigid class system, erecting fences with fervor while his dignity falls into disrepair. And in “The Lodger in Room 726,” a boy who daily brings breakfast to the new tenant in a rooming house unleashes a cascade of emotions previously unknown to him when he pursues his fantasy that the man is a well-known murderer on the lam.

An astonishing debut, written with a wry intelligence and an irresistible blend of humor, wit, and pathos, *Video* masterfully evokes traditional Indian culture as it confronts the onrush of change. In subtle gestures and keenly observed details, Meera Nair reveals an entire world of gleaming particularity and transcendent emotional power.

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