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The Alphabet Of Birds



Synopsis

If death comes to a loved one, can we grieve alone? When all around is in ruins, can we confine our lives to one beautiful room constructed out of art, or love, or family ties? And when the words we know prove inadequate, can we turn to the language of birds? In an arty mansion in Milan's industrial zone, two men are shown one of the last remaining Futurist noise machines - an Intonarumore - and a painful old truth surfaces. A musician travels to three continents to see her siblings before returning to Johannesburg; her home is plundered every night around her as she composes a requiem. A man follows his male lover from London to Berlin's clubbing scene and on to a ruined castle in which the lover's family lives. He is looking for an antidote. The protagonists in SJ Naud's South African Literary Award-winning short story collection are listening out for answers that cannot be expressed. Offering fresh perspectives on gay, expat and artistic subcultures and tackling the pain of loss head on, Naud's stories go fearlessly and tenderly to the heart of our experiences of desire, love and death.

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Customer Reviews

I liked some stories more than others, same with the writing. Sometimes the stories grabbed my attention, the author seemed brave, other times not. The stories are situated in the world of people who are displaced somehow from their country of origin or inside their country of origin - which is interesting up to a point. If you are looking for insights in to the race or political issues of South Africa, this is not really the book. Naude's voice is of detached longing. Not sure what the longing was for but the detached part felt familiar and slightly disappointing because it had a single note of the mostly melancholic. I liked the book enough to finish it a week ago, but as I write the review I had difficulties recalling any specific moments.

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