



Venus in the Afternoon (Katherine Anne Porter Prize in Short Fiction)

Tehila Lieberman

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The short stories in this rich debut collection embody in their complexity Alice Munro's description of the short story as "a world seen in a quick, glancing light." In chiseled and elegant prose, Lieberman conjures wildly disparate worlds. A middle aged window washer, mourning his wife and an estranged daughter, begins to grow attached to a young woman he sees through the glass; a writer, against his better judgment, pursues a new relationship with a femme fatale who years ago broke his heart; and the daughter of a Holocaust survivor struggles with the delicate decision of whether to finally ask her aging mother how it was that she survived. It is all here—the exigencies of love, of lust, the raw, unlit terrain of grief. Whether plumbing the darker depths or casting a humorous eye on a doomed relationship, these stories never force a choice between tragedy and redemption, but rather invite us into the private moments and crucibles of lives as hungry and flawed as our own. "Quiet, moving, masterfully crafted. Such are the nine stories in Venus in the Afternoon. Tehila Lieberman writes with precision, restraint, with a compassionate heart. She inhabits her characters, young or old, men or women, honestly, but without judgment, until they rise off the page and stand before us breathing and alive. New York, the Atacama desert, Amsterdam or Cuzco in Peru, the settings in Venus in the Afternoon are just as varied as the lives which they contain. A wonderful collection, one that will stay in your mind long after you have bid it goodbye." —Miroslav Penkov, author of East of the West and judge

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