

In Other Lifetimes All I've Lost Comes Back to Me

Courtney Sender

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The stories of Courtney Sender's brooding, poignant collection *In Other Lifetimes All I've Lost Comes Back to Me* meditate on memory, loss, and desire.

A handful of characters surface in various incarnations in these fourteen linked stories. A woman's past loves come back to her all at once in a sad, witty reflection on the lives she could have led. Two related stories cover the intense, ill-fated relationship between two artists, with each woman reflecting on the fear and longing that drove them apart and on the doting father who embodies their sadness. Several stories consider the Holocaust, with recurring visits from Nana, including one where Nana is a girl at a Nazi prison camp who gives a tour to an American in exchange for a piece of hard candy.

Several stories sparkle with fanciful images, including one wherein an angel on stilts with papier-mache wings reminds a woman of a past love. In another, Lilith, Adam's outcast wife, finds love outside of Eden and pities Adam. Elsewhere, a woman rummages through her murdered lover's organs when he's displayed in a bloodied uniform at the Museum of Period Clothes; it's no surprise to her that his heart is a stone.

The sharp humor and imagination in these stories helps to temper the aching loneliness of people who are in various phases of losing, rejecting, or longing for love. Their stories reside in a liminal space where the edge of desire is, as one character describes it, like a "vibrating string she didn't see the end of."

Circling themes of loss and longing, the short stories of *In Other Lifetimes All I've Lost Comes Back to Me* are restless in their coverage of creative, passionate souls yearning for love.

KRISTEN RABE (March / April 2023)

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