

Night in Erg Chebbi and Other Stories

Edward Hamlin

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Edward Hamlin masterfully plays the full spectrum of literary elements and devices to create globe-spanning fictional worlds bursting with color and life in this collection, winner of an Iowa Short Fiction Award. In exotic Erg Chebbi, an American couple, stalked by memory and menace, find themselves alone amidst huge, hulking dunes. Entwined in saving love in the impenetrable Moroccan night, they find a semblance of peace as the sky above explodes with stars in “a celestial firestorm as suffocating as it is beautiful.” An acclaimed photojournalist who had survived war-zone shootings, nearly dying in filthy backwater clinics, and who had lived a “rootless and lonely existence” for the sake of her work finds herself going incurably blind. She despairs until she finds peace in a new understanding of the physics of light. The young daughter of an IRA assassin flees to Haiti, then to the Brazilian rainforest where, pregnant and under threat, she is confronted with a decision upon which her survival depends. A backwoods American couple has made peace with the condition of their mentally deficient son who needs to run all the time by keeping him on on a long lead for his own safety, but finds their way of life destroyed by a visit from child services.

Beautiful, terrifying, and compassionate, Hamlin’s stories take a multisensory approach—the sound of a skull cracking on tile, the feel of wind that comes in “broad, slapping gusts,” or the anguish of knowing one will never again see the Milky Way—to bring both the natural landscape and the terrain of the human heart to life with power and passion.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Winter 2016)

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