



Blood and Soap: Stories

Linh Dinh

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Blood and Soap is a breakthrough collection of modern-day fables from a wildly inventive American writer whose fiction has been called "terse and edgy" (Booklist) and "vividly imagined" (Kirkus Reviews). Dinh's gift is for constructing, in the manner of Italo Calvino, simple narratives that quickly frame larger questions; with a poet's timing, the author builds his stories to the one or few climactic sentences that brand them with unforgettable meaning. In one tale, a Vietnamese boy's self-guided, haphazard study of English gives way to a meditation on the universality of language: "Everything seems chaotic at first, but nothing is chaotic. One can read anything: ants crawling on the ground; pimples on a face; trees in a forest." In another story, a man opens a newspaper and sees the photograph of a man he may have murdered, which he impulsively clips, only to feel that in doing so he unwittingly has sealed his crime: "As soon as I finished, I realized what I had done: by cutting my father's likeness out of the newspaper, I had removed him from the world." The collection crescendoes in displays of raw creative power, as in "Eight Plots," a rapid-fire of three- and four-sentence summaries, and the brilliant, impressionistic "!"

Blood and Soap is an arresting collection from one of a small number of writers on the vanguard of American fiction.

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