



The Five Dollar Smile: And Other Stories

Shashi Tharoor

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This touching and funny collection of stories showcases Tharoor's daunting literary acumen, as well as the keen sensitivity that informs his ability to write profoundly and entertainingly on themes ranging from family conflict to death. In the title story—written in a lonely hotel room in Geneva soon after the author began his work with the United Nations—a young Indian orphan is on his way to visit America for the first time, and his anguish and longing in the airplane seem hardly different from those of any American child.

Tharoor's admiration for P. G. Wodehouse makes "How Bobby Chatterjee Turned to Drink" a delightful homage, while "The Temple Thief," "The Simple Man," and "The Political Murder" bring to mind O. Henry and Maupassant. His three college stories, "Friends," "The Pyre," and "The Professor's Daughter," are full of youthful high jinks, naïve infatuations, and ingenious wordplay. "The Solitude of the Short-Story Writer" is a smart, self-aware, Woody Allen-esque exploration of a writer's conflicted relationship with his psychiatrist.

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