



The Secret Goldfish: Stories

By David Means



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Readers familiar with **David Means'** electrifying work in the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize -- winning Assorted Fire Events will recognize his extraordinary vision in **The Secret Goldfish**. A trio of erotically charged kids goes on a crime spree in Michigan; a goldfish bears witness to the demise of a Connecticut marriage; and an extremely unlucky man is stalked by lightning. This dazzling new collection reveals Means' rare talent for the short story and establishes his place among the American masters.



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The Secret Goldfish: Stories By David Means Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #337087 in Books
- Published on: 2005-10-04
- Released on: 2005-08-30
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .51" w x 5.31" l,
- Binding: Paperback
- 224 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The characters in this imaginative and penetrating story collection—a man hounded by lightning strikes, a driver blown off the Mackinac bridge, a pianist whose fingers stop working, a woman who slaughters her boyfriend after ambiguous consultations with Jesus and the devil, a bog man roused from his shallow grave—are beset by bolts from the blue. Sometimes the victims and sometimes the perpetrators of calamity, they struggle to extract meaning—and the occasional glimpses of grace and beauty—from the chaos and brutality that disrupt their lives. Means, author of the acclaimed story collection *Assorted Fire Events*, probes a broad range of social registers, from junkies and criminals festering in the postindustrial decay of northern Michigan's iron range to the chilly adulteries of the artsy New York haute bourgeoisie, linking them into a bleak, sometimes apocalyptic panorama of the precariousness of life in a country that "could eat anything, absolutely anything, up." His uncompromising vision rarely indulges anything more comforting than harsh poetic epiphanies, inexplicable moments of clarity gleaned from random encounters with destruction; the story "Michigan Death Trip," a litany of demise from nonnatural causes, is emblematic of the book's sensibility. But every so often, as with the titular goldfish who endures, and even prevails, when his tank is neglected by a family in the throes of divorce, a happy ending slips through.

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From [Booklist](#)

Means' new collection of stories reveals a mature vision in its explorations of violence, boredom, and death in a restrained, cautionary tone. In "Lightning Man," the protagonist suffers a series of lightning strikes that disrupt his life and eventually send him drifting to another part of the rural Midwest, among glue-sniffing, disillusioned farm boys, to tell of his eight fantastic recurrences, vaguely prophetic. In "A Visit from Jesus," salvation and revelation are tragic and ironic, exposing a man's dark secret, leading his girlfriend to kill him and eventually leading to her own murder. "Michigan Death Trip" also has multiple fatalities--ski accident, car accident, drug overdose, murder--that result mostly from a desire for excitement or escape. The title story moves us into domestic suburbia as a fish's owner, whose family life is disintegrating, wonders if the fish is "aware of his eternal hell, caught in the tank's glass grip." Escaping that glass grip, these stories suggest, though much wished for, does not hold much promise. *James O'Laughlin*

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Review

Achingly intelligent....[David Means] stands among our most gifted younger writers." (New York Times)

"David Means knows his way around the English language. [The Secret Goldfish] aims toward a mythology of the modern heartland...so lovely I want to quote the whole thing." (Los Angeles Times)

"Vivid...Means's last collection was a finalist for the National Book Award...the stories here are just as unsentimental and tightly wound." (New York Times Book Review)

"A darkly comic cache of stories . . . impressively inventive." (Elle)

"With stunning simplicity, Means offers 15 stirring portraits of tragedy, loss, and love." (Esquire)

"An imaginative and penetrating collection." (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

“Riveting...it is Means’ signature talent to view the lives of his characters, and life itself, from somewhere just beyond...” (Jeffrey Eugenides, author of *The Virgin Suicides* and *Middlesex*)

“Lean, agile...There’s not a cheap emotion or a predictable conclusion to be found...humane [and] unaccountably lovely.” (New York Times Book Review on *Assorted Fire Events*)

“A splendid short story collection...from one of the most original writers of short fiction working today (Esquire on *Assorted Fire Events*)

Crystalline.” (The New Yorker on *Assorted Fire Events*)

“We care for the characters as if we have known and loved and detested them forever...An exceptional book.” (Michael Faber on *Assorted Fire Events*)

“Means is a courageous writer, intelligent and funny and humane...the pleasure in reading *THE SECRET GOLDFISH* is tremendous.” (Donald Antrim)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Amanda Mathis:

This *The Secret Goldfish: Stories* book is just not ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is actually information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper a person read a lot of information you will get. This kind of *The Secret Goldfish: Stories* without we realize teach the one who examining it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't be worry *The Secret Goldfish: Stories* can bring any time you are and not make your carrier space or bookshelves' come to be full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even cell phone. This *The Secret Goldfish: Stories* having good arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not experience uninterested in reading.

Allison Sala:

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David Murray:

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