



Tales from Dayrut: Short Stories

Mohamed Mustagab

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This collection of fourteen connected stories and a novella, *From the Secret History of Numan Abdel Hafez*, takes us deep into Upper Egypt and the village of Dayrut al-Sharif, in which Mohamed Mustagab was born. To depict a world renowned for its poverty, ignorance, vendettas, and implacable code of honor, Mustagab deploys the black humor and Swiftian sarcasm of the insider who knows his society only too well. When the stillness of a day's end is shattered by a single gunshot, poignant beauty merges seamlessly into horror, and when a police officer seeking to unravel a murder finds himself with more body parts than he knows what to do with, violence tips as easily into farce. In counterpoint, the author's often surrealist imagination explores the mysteries of a landscape where seductive women haunt dusty paths and a man may find himself crushed like a worm beneath another's foot. Elsewhere, the horizons of 'my village' expand to include other countries (the author worked in the Arabian Peninsula for a number of years), where equally disastrous consequences follow on folly and self-delusion. Previously almost unknown in English, Mustagab's voice is both original and disturbing.

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