

[PDF] The Bird Man And The Lap Dancer: Close Encounters With Strangers

Eric Hansen - pdf download free book



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Description:

From Publishers Weekly The best, most enduring travel writers don't invite readers to merely view vistas through other eyes, but take the trip further, deep into the psychology of place. Hansen (*Stranger in the Forest; Motoring with Mohammed*) does just that in this lyrical collection that is equal parts travelogue, memoir and anthropological treatise. He details explorations from his 20s, 30s and 40s (he's now 57), all of which are compelling, surprising and utterly memorable. Though

some are set in Europe, most take place in distant, alluring places in Asia and the South Pacific. "Night Fishing with Nahimah" recalls Hansen's extended 1977 trip to the Maldives Islands near Singapore, where he journeyed to smuggle fish from the islands to the mainland. In the Maldives, he encountered an island paradise awash in contradictions, devoutly Muslim yet devoid of sexual inhibitions. (Hansen also nearly died there from severe hepatitis.) "Listening to the Kava" takes him to the outer islands of Vanuata, where he partakes of a hallucinogenic drink with local men. "Life at the Grand Hotel" evokes Hansen's months-long stay on Thursday Island in the Pacific after the prawn trawler he was working on nearly capsized in a storm. The wild goings-on at the seedy little hotel are hilarious, poignant and distinctly of another era. But Hansen's most enthralling tale is "Life Lessons from a Dying Stranger," about how, while negotiating Calcutta's bureaucratic maze for shipping large packages, Hansen volunteers at Mother Teresa's "Nirmal Hriday" (Home for Dying Destitutes). This haunting vignette alone makes this magical book worthwhile.

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From *Starred Review* This extraordinary collection of short essays may leave readers disoriented as it leaps from the French Riviera to the South Pacific, India, Manhattan, California, Borneo, and back to California. But the characters Hansen meets along the way anchor themselves indelibly in the reader's imagination. In spare, unsentimental, yet deeply moving prose, Hansen relates a story of human generosity featuring a retired ballerina who shelters a homeless woman and strikes up a deep, abiding friendship. Hansen's accounts of his sojourns on isolated islands of the South Pacific strip away inhibitions of Western culture, giving him freedom to explore extremes of unabashed life, sex, and love, along with ritual hallucinogenic drugs. A brief stop in Calcutta to ship his worldly goods back to America turns into months of battling an incorrigible bureaucracy yet yields great blessing as he volunteers his idle hours as a barber in Mother Teresa's hospice. A second portrait of a ballerina, this time a retired Russian who has become a society caterer while living in a decaying Manhattan neighborhood, chronicles how an undaunted spirit can overcome life's worst reverses. Other delightful, affecting surprises await in these narratives of uncommon and daring lives. *Mark Knoblauch*

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