



ARACELY

And Other Stories
by Paul Le Mat

KIRKUS REVIEW

Le Mat (*Hasten Down the Wind*, 2010, etc.) returns with a collection of noir shorts.

Each vignette recounts brushes with crime and danger as the protagonist becomes the unsuspecting—and very willing—hero. The women purr and the men throw punches, and readers can almost smell the cigarette smoke curling up from the page. Staccato sentences give the stories a quick pace that crash toward the end, but rarely to a resolution. The title story, “Aracely,” is the strongest, with only a few dated references interrupting its seamless pace; the protagonist looks for a phone booth and phone book, and calls e-mail a “newfangled invention.” The suspense builds deliciously, as the two main characters try to solve a murder without help from the police. It can be cliché at times: a potbellied detective who doesn’t have a clue; a foreign mobster with a temper; a secret prostitute ring. These plotlines surface in later tales. But the deliberate pace and character development make this story shine, and keep the pages turning quickly. The following stories feature lonely protagonists who are shadows of the macho heroes they hope to be and sometimes become, as in “A Mysterious Trip.” These Everymen are divorced, unemployed, sad (“Just Another Day,” “Dasher”). Crime thrillers are spaced out between brief musings on the impossibility and hopelessness of love (“The Look of Love,” “Tradition”).

Will satisfy readers with an appreciation for vigilante justice and a soft spot for sensitive heroes.

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