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The Fat Artist and Other Stories

Benjamin Hale

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The Fat Artist and Other Stories Benjamin Hale
Prize-winning author Benjamin Hale's fiction abounds with a love of language and a wild joy for storytelling. In prose alternately stark, lush and hallucinatory, occasionally nightmarish and often absurd, the seven stories in this collection are suffused with fear and desire, introducing us to a company of indelible characters reeling with love, jealousy, megalomania, and despair.

As in his debut novel, *The Evolution of Bruno Littlemore*, the voices in these stories speak from the margins: a dominatrix whose longtime client, a US congressman, drops dead during a tryst in a hotel room; an addict in precarious recovery who lands a job driving a truck full of live squid; a heartbroken performance artist who attempts to eat himself to death as a work of art. From underground radicals hiding in Morocco to an aging hippy in Colorado in the summer before 9/11 to a young drag queen in New York at the cusp of the AIDS crisis, these stories rove freely across time and place, carried by haunting, peculiar narratives that form the vast tapestry of American life.

Hale's work has earned accolades from writers as disparate as novelist Jonathan Ames, who compared discovering his work to watching Mickey Mantle play ball for the first time; *Washington Post* critic Ron Charles, who declared him "fully evolved as a writer," and bestselling author Jodi Picoult, who simply called him "brilliant." Pairing absurdity with philosophical musings on the human condition and the sway our most private selves and hidden pasts hold over us, the stories in *The Fat Artist* reside in the unnerving intersections between life and death, art and ridicule, consumption and creation.

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