



I Am No One You Know: Stories

By Joyce Carol Oates

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I Am No One You Know contains nineteen startling stories that bear witness to the remarkably varied lives of Americans of our time. In "Fire," a troubled young wife discovers a rare, radiant happiness in an adulterous relationship. In "Curly Red," a girl makes a decision to reveal a family secret, and changes her life irrevocably. In "The Girl with the Blackened Eye," selected for The Best American Mystery Stories 2001, a girl pushed to an even greater extreme of courage and desperation manages to survive her abduction by a serial killer. And in "Three Girls," two adventuresome NYU undergraduates seal their secret love by following, and protecting, Marilyn Monroe in disguise at Strand Used Books on a snowy evening in 1956.

These vividly rendered portraits of women, men, and children testify to Oates's compassion for the mysterious and luminous resources of the human spirit.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Never one to shy away from grim or sensational themes, Oates writes about murder, rape, arson and terrorism in her latest collection of short fiction. In these 19 stories, she evokes the underbellies of small towns and the bizarre and obsessive desires of their inhabitants. In "Upholstery," a teenager finds herself helplessly attracted to a lecherous older man. A 14-year-old in "The Girl with the Blackened Eye" is brutally abducted but afraid to break her kidnapper's trust by escaping. In Oates's precise psychological renderings, victims are as complex as villains and almost always more interesting. The lure of the criminal is seductive, impossible to resist. Two stories, "In Hiding" and "The Instructor," feature middle-class female intellectuals inexplicably drawn to convicts. The prototypical victim, Marilyn Monroe--also the subject of Oates's acclaimed 2001 novel *Blonde*--appears in disguise in "Three Girls," when two young coeds encounter her in the Strand bookstore and agree to help her remain anonymous. The collection closes with a story about September 11 that in anyone but Oates's hands would fall flat. But "The Mutants," in which a young woman trapped in her downtown apartment building refuses to be paralyzed by fear, is beautifully, uncannily affecting. "She was hollow-eyed and gaunt yet wakeful, no longer the dreamy-eyed blond. A mutant being, primed to survive." Indeed, even the strangest events in this sure-footed collection are painfully familiar. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [Booklist](#)

Oates is vitally concerned, even obsessed, with the most primal and disturbing encounters between females and males, and her new searing short stories explore the malevolent aspects of human sexuality with unflinching authenticity and a cathartic fascination. Set in Oates country--bleak, rural New York State--these bold and bloody tales enfold elements of the mystery genre as Oates introduces compellingly expressive young women threatened or assaulted by men, some of whom they should be able to trust. Race is frequently a factor, as is the vulnerability of literary women somewhat like herself, a concern Oates dramatizes to chilling affect in "The Instructor," in which a novice writing teacher, "a young woman with a quiet, implacable will," confronts a former death-row inmate. Then, in another exceptionally accomplished tale, "Me & Wolfie, 1979," wizardly Oates turns the tables by portraying a crazed and destructive woman. Ultimately, key truths emerge: family bonds can be shackles, and women possess the amazing ability to put their lives back together after even the most hellish ordeal. *Donna Seaman*
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About the Author

Joyce Carol Oates is a recipient of the National Medal of Humanities, the National Book Critics Circle Ivan Sandrof Lifetime Achievement Award, the National Book Award, and the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in Short Fiction. She is the Roger S. Berlind Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at Princeton University and has been a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters since 1978.

Users Review

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