

Monochrome Madonna Kalpana Swaminathan

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Sitara said, with awful distinctness, 'I think I'm going to die'. And that's how I got stuck with the annual corpse. Half an hour later I stood in an empty flat, along with a stranger who was very recently, and very violently, dead. Rushing to Sitara's aid, Lalli's niece Sita is distracted by Raphael's Sistine Madonna. Why is it monochrome? And what does it have to do with the body on the living-room floor? Such questions are hardly relevant to the police in their hunt for the murderer. But Lalli is a detective who revels in curiosities, and she thinks otherwise. A brisk thriller of deceit and intrigue, The Monochrome Madonna has Lalli at her most astute as she interprets the nuances of a murder without motive.

A pulp with ESP, a begnin elephant, a kidnap and a secret service led by the famous Rani of Bandalbaaz, all to astonish and entertain the reader in the most fabulous of journeys, and plunges him into a world of mayhem and adventure.

'Maruti took a newspaper package from his khaki satchel and handed it to Lalli . . . There was a wad of silky fluff inside. Nestled preciously in it, something glinted slyly like a jewel. It was one perfect fingernail, painted pink.' 24 Patwardhan Cross. The solitary bone that surfaces in the garden there doesn't mean much to police surgeon Dr Q or Inspector Savio. But Lalli, who collects curiosities, finds it curious. Things get curiouser when a dying gigolo whispers the address in terror, and curiouser still when a mummified finger with a chic manicure turns up in the same garden. Lalli might

have ignored these curiosities had there not been a child at the heart of the matter . . . As she investigates what makes this garden grow, Lalli uncovers a gruesome tale.

Lalli, retired policewoman, intrepid detective, collects curiosities... that inevitably lead to murder. The curiosity of murder unfolds in seven acts. Since Kalpana Swaminathan's first whodunit was published over ten years ago, Lalli--sixty and silver-haired and tough as nails--has been one of the most memorable detectives in Indian fiction. Lalli returns in this brilliant page-turner, a collection of seven stories, to solve some of the strangest, most complex cases of her career. The opening act, in which a face keeps reappearing until a crime committed long ago is revealed, is followed by a murder that could be hypothetical--or a reality (Lalli turns to Schrodinger's Cat to find out). In the third act in this unfolding drama, Lalli and Sita are invited to a book-burning which turns out to be murder most foul. And Lalli turns her skills to the world of high fashion when Sita sits next to a serial killer on a bus--but was he killer or victim? The aptly named Suicide Point in Bombay's suburbs, leads Lalli to a suicide that turns out to be something far more sinister. And an innocuous desk ornament is the clue to a crime most artistically executed. Finally, for connoisseurs of fiction, the curtains come down with a threnody for lost love.

How can governments ensure that women have the same employment and entrepreneurship opportunities as men? One important step is to level the legal playing field so that the rules for operating in the worlds of work and business apply equally regardless of gender. *Women, Business and the Law 2018*, the fifth edition in a series, examines laws affecting women's economic inclusion in 189 economies worldwide. It tracks progress that has been made over the past two years while identifying opportunities for reform to ensure economic empowerment for all. The report updates all indicators as of June 1, 2017 and explores new areas of research, including financial inclusion.

A dark and affecting tale about the turbulence of growing up, the many worlds we inhabit and the secret lives we live Fifteen-year-old Tenral leads two lives. There is the one she leads with her family and her friends at school-'a skin-of-milk life, easy and forgiving, like five o'clock sunshine'. Into her other, difficult life, move her English teacher, Mrs Alfie, and her dead lover. Tenral recreates their romance, taking her clues from Mrs Alfie's dramatic rendering of poetry, and tries to reconcile the past with the present through her own fairytales. Even as her friends look on, disapproving of her flights of fancy, Tenral's complex imaginary world widens to include the dour Maths teacher, Mr Tilak, and Mrs Alfie's mad mother who spills the secret about Mrs Alfie's navy blue baby . . . Events hurtle towards a frightening climax as Mrs Alfie emerges from Tenral's world of make-believe to reveal the truth. Tenral can reject this truth, and escape into her world of fantasy. Or she can embrace real life with its hardships and disappointments, in the hope that in the end it is all worthwhile, for there is always ambrosia for afters.

Reading New India is an insightful exploration of contemporary Indian writing in English. Exploring the work of such writers as Aravind Adiga (author of the Man-Booker Prize winning *White Tiger*), Usha K.R. and Taseer, the book looks at how the 'new' India has been recreated and defined in an English Language literature that is now reaching a global audience. The book describes how Indian fiction has moved beyond notions of 'postcolonial' writing to reflect an increasingly confident and diverse cultures. *Reading New India* covers such topics as: - Representation of the city: Mumbai and Bangalore - Chick Lit to Crick Lit - Call centre dramas and corporate lives - Crime novels and Bharati narratives - Graphic novels Including a chronological time-line of major social, cultural and political reforms, biographies of the major authors covered, further reading and a glossary of Hindi terms, this book is an essential guide for students of contemporary world literature and postcolonial writing.

Nobody asked: What was she like? Venus? By daylight? And if they had, what could I have said? For the truth was in my stories, not in what I said I'd seen. All I had seen was a black dot. She had passed me by as she passed by the sun. In *Venus Crossing*, Kalpana Swaminathan masterfully crafts twelve stories that lay bare the deepest complexities of human relationships. These stories capture the instant of transit, that moment when the impossible--the unthinkable--is absorbed into the fabric of life so that life can be lived again. That moment is everything: revelation, challenge, existence. In the *Yellow Dupatta*, practical compulsions surmount grief as a young couple takes their dead child home from hospital. A middle-aged nurse finds romance with the most obnoxious of patients in *Sister Thomas and Mister Gomes*. Two young women shattered by rejection begin the long journey of survival in *Fly Away*, Peter. Incident at Abu Ghraib finds Sukhi appalled by her mother's empathy for a disgraced American soldier. Hemant is counselled, in *Euthanasia*, to opt for the final solution--but will he? Incisive, brilliant and deeply compassionate, *Venus Crossing* showcases Kalpana Swaminathan's consummate skill as a storyteller and proves, yet again, the uncompromising vision of her craft.

Kalidasa is the major poet and dramatist of classical Sanskrit literature - a many-sided talent of extraordinary scope and exquisite language. His great poem, *Meghadutam* (The Cloud Messenger), tells of a divine being, punished for failing in his sacred duties with a years' separation from his beloved. A work of subtle emotional nuances, it is a haunting depiction of longing and separation. The play *Sakuntala* describes the troubled love between a Lady of Nature and King Duhsanta. This beautiful blend of romance and comedy, transports its audience into an enchanted world in which mortals mingle with gods.

And Kalidasa's poem Rtusamharam (The Gathering of the Seasons) is an exuberant observation of the sheer variety of the natural world, as it teems with the energies of the great god Siva.

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