



Birds of Paradise Lost

Short Stories by
Andrew Lam

The thirteen stories in *Birds of Paradise Lost* shimmer with humor and pathos as they chronicle the anguish and joy and bravery of America's newest Americans, the troubled lives of those who fled Vietnam and remade themselves in the San Francisco Bay Area. The past—memories of war and its aftermath, of murder, arrest, re-education camps and new economic zones, of escape and shipwreck and atrocity—is ever present in these wise and compassionate stories. It plays itself out in surprising ways in the lives of people who thought they had moved beyond the nightmares of war and exodus. It comes back on TV in the form of a confession from a cannibal; it enters the Vietnamese restaurant as a Vietnam Vet with a shameful secret; it articulates itself in the peculiar tics of a man with Tourette's Syndrome who struggles to deal with a profound tragedy. *Birds of Paradise Lost* is an emotional tour de force, intricately rendering the false starts and revelations in the struggle for integration, and in so doing, the human heart.

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Biographical note:

Andrew Lam is the author of *Perfume Dreams: Reflections on the Vietnamese Diaspora*, which won the 2006 PEN Open Book Award, and *East Eats West: Writing in Two Hemispheres*. Lam is an editor and cofounder of New American Media, an association of over two thousand ethnic media outlets in America. He was a regular commentator on NPR's *All Things Considered* for many years, and was the subject of a 2004 PBS documentary called *My Journey Home*. His essays have appeared in newspapers and magazines such as the *New York Times*, *The LA Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Atlanta Journal*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Mother Jones*, and *The Nation*, among many others. His short stories have been widely taught and anthologized. *Birds of Paradise Lost* is his first story collection. He lives in San Francisco.

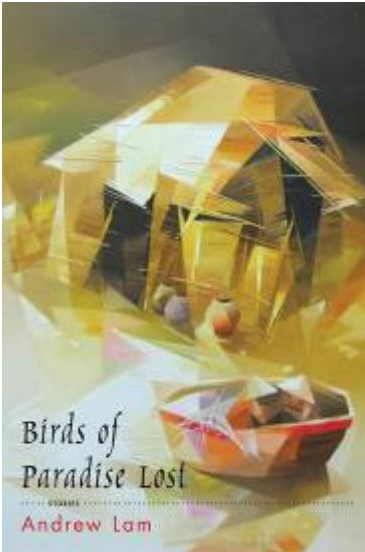
Praise for *Birds of Paradise Lost*:

“Andrew Lam's *Birds of Paradise Lost* brilliantly engages the fundamental theme of much great literary work: who am I and what is my place in the universe? His stories are elegant and humane and funny and sad. Lam has instantly established himself as one of our finest fiction writers.”

—Robert Olen Butler



More Praise for *Birds of Paradise Lost*:



“Read Andrew Lam, and bask in his love of language, and his compassion for people, both those here and those from far away. He reminds us that we have history in common; we can laugh and cry together.”

—Maxine Hong Kingston

“Andrew Lam’s exacting delivery is matched only by his mesmerizing story; and in this collection of tales, both raw and oneiric, is a majestic credo.”

—Oscar Hijuelos, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*

“When I grow up, I want to be Andrew Lam. I want to write with a kind of voice that is both charming and full of sadness and humour. Mr. Lam is an important writer, providing a unique lens into American life. Yes, someday, I would like to be Andrew Lam.”

—Noël Alunit, author of *Talking to the Moon*, a *Los Angeles Times* Bestseller

“Whatever happened to the Vietnamese ‘boat people’ who escaped after the fall of Saigon? ‘A lot’ is the simple answer; for a complicated, often scabrously funny account, read Andrew Lam’s stories. They are so American, so unexpected, so nuanced and robust, that you will be informed, charmed, and deeply moved.”

—Howard Junker, Editor Emeritus, *Zyzzyva*

“While Andrew Lam’s characters share a broader history, each story is an entire world that Lam animates fully with remarkably spare strokes. What these stories have in common is the intelligence behind them, which is at once fierce, compassionate, and wonderfully perverse. Each story pleases and surprises, and the collection as a whole resonates long after the reading is done.”

—Elise Blackwell, author of *Hunger*

“These poignant, sometimes humorous, often heart-rending stories gift us with the voices and faces of the Vietnamese-American community: a community that has finally been able to express itself through the fiction of a new generation of writers such as Andrew Lam. Yet this is also fiction which in its universal and human truths pulls off the delicate trick of both including and transcending the ethnic genre and firmly situates Lam among the best writers of American—and world—literature.”

—Wayne Karlin, author of *Wandering Souls: Journeys with the Dead*

“As a fellow Vietnamese American, I don’t read Andrew Lam’s stories; I experience them. There are very few writers who can achieve this for me; Andrew can.”

—Lac Su, author of *I Love Yous Are for White People*

“After reading *Birds of Paradise Lost*, it feels as if one has been to the opera. This is a work drenched in color and music, sorrow and beauty. The intensity of emotion conveyed in these pages is stunning. A bravura performance.”

—Lori Marie Carlson, author of *The Sunday Tertulia*

