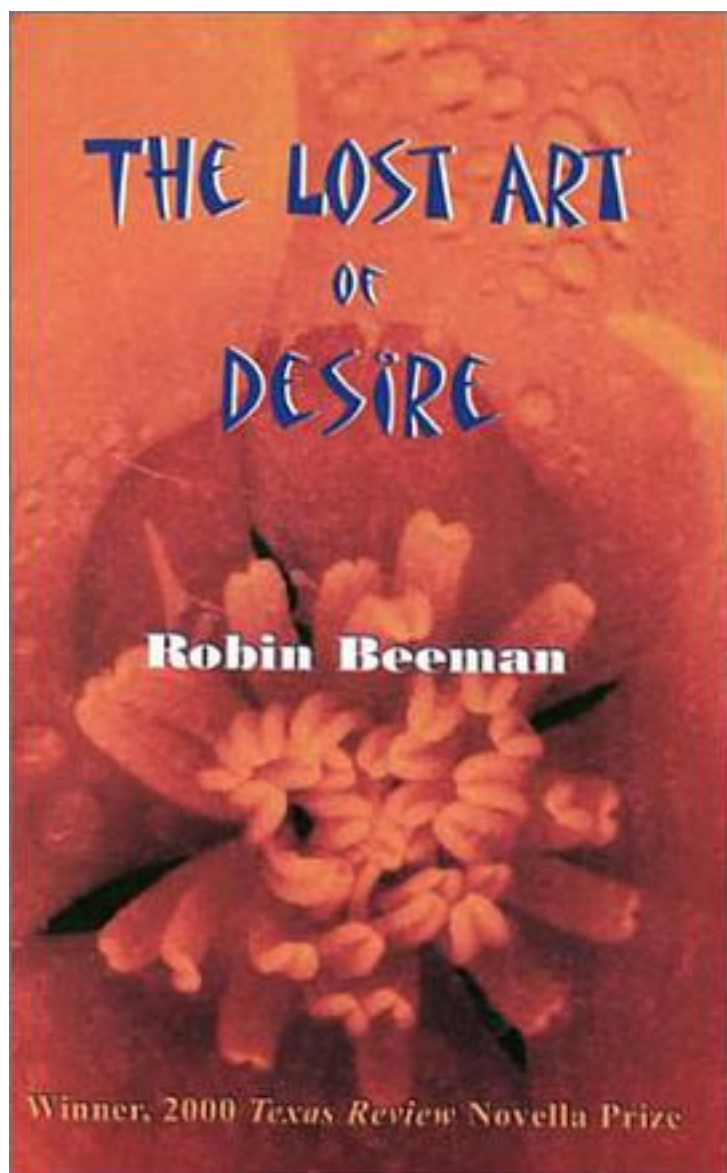


The Lost Art of Desire



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"You like to look at our ruins, you and your friend, but what is it you've seen?" Jenna is asked by the colonel in charge of the region around the archaeological site of Piedras Coloradas. In *The Lost Art of Desire* the travelers discover they are the ones being observed in a place where appearance and reality do not readily agree. Jenna and her lover Sam arrive at the Mayan ruins of Piedras Coloradas, aware that there has recently been trouble over land issues between rebels and the government. While Sam takes pictures of the ancient stonework, Jenna goes out with her binoculars to look for birds. She does not expect to find the rare resplendent quetzal, but she will accept what she finds, hoping that by the end of this trip she'll be able to make a decision about the rest of her life. At first everything appears safe, although the posada where they're staying is almost empty. They hear sounds at night that Sam believes to be gunfire, but are told the noises are only fireworks in a neighboring village. An American woman staying at the posada goes out for a walk and doesn't return. Soldiers station themselves in the town plaza. Jenna does not consider herself a risk taker, yet she now finds herself in a situation where everything she's believed stable is threatened, and she must act in ways she's never anticipated. In spare and luminous prose, this novella examines the lives of two people who set out to explore a foreign land and discover what they must actually explore are their own assumptions about themselves.

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目录:

[The Lost Art of Desire 下载链接1](#)

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