

Basic Black With Pearls



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Shirley Lola Montez Kaszenbowski, nee Silverberg, is a middle-aged woman in a tweed coat, a basic black dress, and a strand of real pearls. Idling over Breakfast Number Four in a hotel coffee shop, this woman may seem quite typical, but her unexceptional exterior conceals a deep sense of awe at the most ordinary of people and events. Shirley's entire existence revolves around rendezvous with her lover, Coenrand--fleeting en-

counters all over the globe arranged via a code derived from National Geographic magazine articles and deciphered with unpredictable but precise intuition. In Shirley's admiring eyes, Coenraad is one of those princely, indomitable men who "stand foursquare with an obstinate attachment to the ground." When she sees him "all fears disappear: babies don't die, planes fly on course. Muzak is silenced, and certitude reigns."

The search for her lover brings Shirley unexpectedly back from a tour of the Mexican pyramids to the unsettling world of her own past as a Jewish immigrant in Toronto. There she finds the neighborhood bakeries and the dim rooming houses of

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