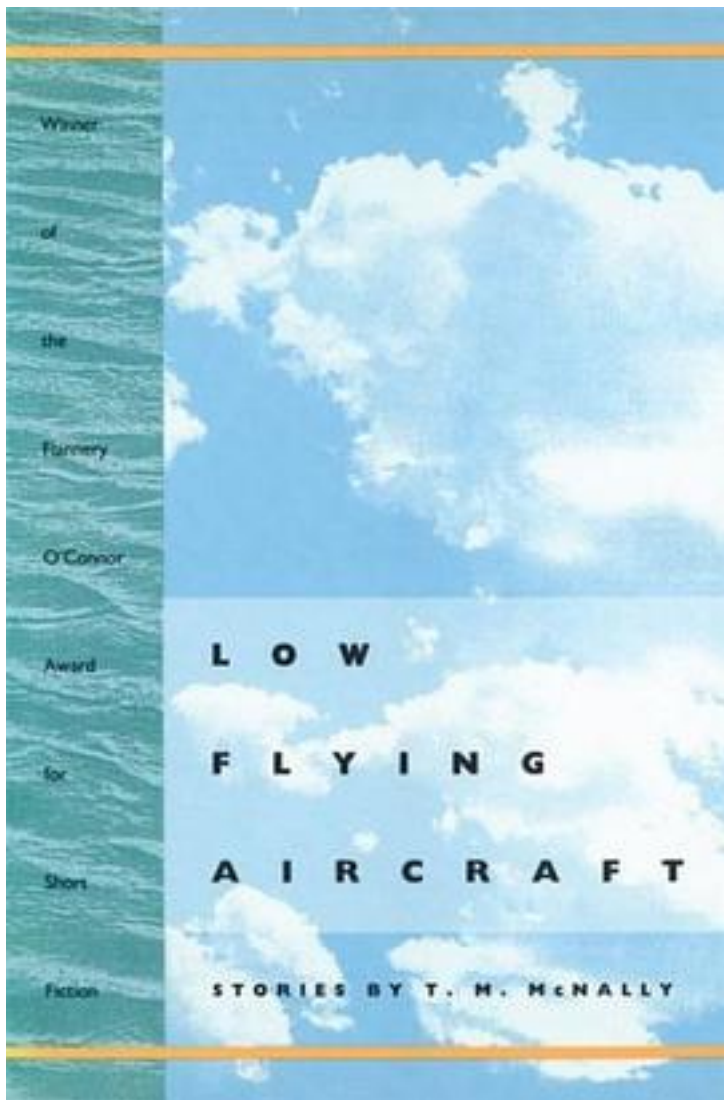


Low Flying Aircraft



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"Low Flying Aircraft" is a collection of interrelated stories in which one life is equally capable of influencing another "under a sky the size of history." Spanning a period of fourteen years, the stories are connected by the pasts of Orion McClenahan and Helen Jowalski, childhood friends whose fathers shared a law practice in Chicago. In 1976 a freak accident changes their lives irrevocably, and the stories are about the people Orion and Helen grow up to be, the people they love, and the people they lose along the way. In "Paris, the Easy Way," Sam is a stable manager who steps in to the lives of others while trying to avoid his own. Troubled by the disappearance of his brother in Cambodia and his own complicated relationship with his brother's wife, Sam finally accepts the mysteries that surround him: "Lightning, gravity, love--I've never properly understood any of it." Anna, a columnist writing on the complexities that face young modern women, loses all sense of her identity while visiting her father, a dying man who wants a grandson almost as much as he wants a daughter like Milly, the heroine of his favorite western novel. The voices in this collection describe a world of uncertain borders, where individuals are sustained by "thin, brief moments of direction." Orion a disillusioned photojournalist, sets himself free from his wealthy family and their Midwestern habits by discarding the things of his life: a clock radio, a blender, paperbacks. He will board a plane and fly to Central America "in order to document the situation, do some good." In "Breathing is Key," Sarah momentarily decides to stay with her abusive boyfriend because she doesn't know where else to go. "I think we have a lot here" she says, "and not all of it's bad." In story after story personal histories unfold, always what lies in wait is the possibility for connection. A brother who dies young, a first love, an abandoned husband--each persists in the realm of memory, adding texture and meaning to the lives they influence. In "The Future of Ruth" a woman comes to understand that "the proof of one's life lay in her death and the trees that might spread out and over a soul." In revolutionary Nicaragua, on a ranch in Arizona, from a Vermont Ski slope, the souls in "Low Flying Aircraft" soar, all hoping to catch a glimpse "of the shape of things to come, of possibility."

作者介绍:

目录:

[Low Flying Aircraft_下载链接1](#)

标签

评论

[Low Flying Aircraft 下载链接1](#)

书评

[Low Flying Aircraft 下载链接1](#)