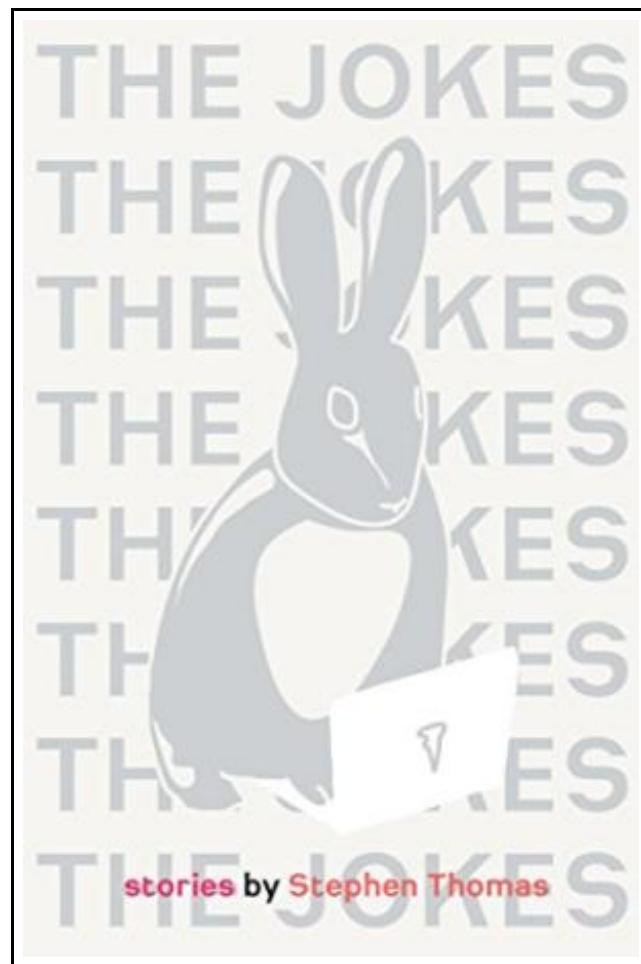


The Jokes



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Reviews

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(Mitchell Kuhn III)*

THE JOKES

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BOOK THUG, United States, 2016. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 203 x 132 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. We sit, hunched over the words that appear on our smartphone screens, altogether unaware of the story of our lives that is going on around us, even as we focus on the minutiae of our social media friends daily activities. These are the stories that draw our undivided attention, and these are the types of deftly observed, wholly engrossing narratives that make up Stephen Thomas's debut flash-fiction collection, *The Jokes*. Presented in the form of a most common present-tense--as a series of moments in a social-media-like feed --this collection of very short stories riffs on the form of the joke, but as this might be understood by the best culture-critical comedians of our time: Andy Kaufman, Stephen Wright, Norm McDonald, Jon Stewart, Richard Pryor. And much like those stand-up artists who sanctified the joke-form, these stories deal with sometimes-intense subjects, yet with a kind of SSRI-like placidity that allows readers to cling to each word as the narratives unfold. In drawing comparisons to Lydia Davis's creatively detached but inventively curious writing, Thomas's *The Jokes* is a book for thinkers; sad and funny, hopeful and determined, nostalgic and cerebral, these vignettes offer a very personal, yet amazingly relatable entry-point into big ideas that trouble our times--religion, sexuality, life and death, and ways of being in the world--all while coloured by touches of weird otherworldliness that living in someone else's social-media feed can bring. Fans of metafiction and philosophy, alt lit, artists and academics (particularly students of art history and theory), readers interested in experimental and somewhat cerebral fiction in the vein of Ben Marcus, Lily Hoang, or Maggie Nelson, as well as audiences interested in the uses and...

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