



The Pier Falls: And Other Stories (Vintage Contemporaries)

Mark Haddon

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From Mark Haddon, author of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *A Spot of Bother*, and *The Red House*, nine dazzling stories diverse in style but united in emotional power

The tales in Mark Haddon's lyrical and uncompromising new collection take many forms—Victorian adventure story, science fiction, morality tale, contemporary realism—but they all showcase his virtuoso gifts as a stylist and the deep well of empathy that made his three bestselling novels so compelling.

The characters here are often isolated physically or estranged from their families, yet they yearn for connection. In aggregate the stories become a meditation on the essential aloneness of the human condition but also on the connections, however tenuous and imperfect, that link people to one another. In the title story, an unnamed narrator describes with cool precision a catastrophe that strikes a seaside town, both tearing lives apart and bringing them together.

In the prizewinning story "The Gun," a boy's life is marked by the afternoon he encounters a semiautomatic pistol belonging to his friend's older brother; in "The Island," a Greek princess is abandoned on an island by her abductor; in "The Boys Who Left Home to Learn Fear," a group of adventurers travel deep into the Amazonian jungle but discover the gravest danger lurking among their own number; and in "The Woodpecker and the Wolf," a woman wonders whether she has chosen to travel to Mars only to escape the entanglement of human relationships back here on Earth.

Drawing inventively from history, myth, folktales, and modern life, *The Pier Falls* showcases Haddon's immense gifts of invention and penetrating insight.

From the Hardcover edition.

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