

Roman Stories by Jhumpa Lahiri- A Book Review

Like Jhumpa Lahiri, I'm also in love with Italy and have been learning Italian for some time. As a student on a limited budget, moving to Italy isn't an option right now, so I was excited to pick up Lahiri's *Roman Stories* at the airport. Given my affection for Italy and my trust in Lahiri's writing, I thought this collection would be the perfect mental trip to Rome during my flight.

I've always been a fan of short stories, but unfortunately, *Roman Stories* didn't meet my expectations. The book starts strong with *The Boundary*, where a family vacationing in the Roman countryside is observed by the caretaker's daughter, and *The Reentry*, where two women reconnect after many years. Both stories establish compelling dynamics and evoke human emotion, as Lahiri often does. However, as the collection progressed, the stories began to feel weaker, with each one fading in impact compared to the last.

One story that stood out as particularly dull was *P's Parties*. It felt unnecessarily stretched, with flat characters who lacked the depth Lahiri usually brings. The narrative didn't offer anything substantial, and I found myself losing interest. Even Dante Alighieri's ghost, who appears in the final story, couldn't salvage the book. His cameo felt like a forced afterthought rather than a meaningful addition to the narrative.

Thematically, the stories explore alienation, displacement, and loneliness—common themes in Lahiri's work. Perhaps they were more personal to her, given her own journey with Italian language and culture. However, I struggled to connect. Lahiri's portrayal of Italy here felt cold and unwelcoming, a far cry from the vibrant Rome I imagined.

Roman Stories isn't Lahiri's strongest work. While I still believe in her talent, I'm curious how my opinion might change if I read the Italian version in the future. If you're a fan of Lahiri's other works, you might find something to appreciate, but for a more compelling introduction, I'd recommend *Interpreter of Maladies* or *The Namesake*.