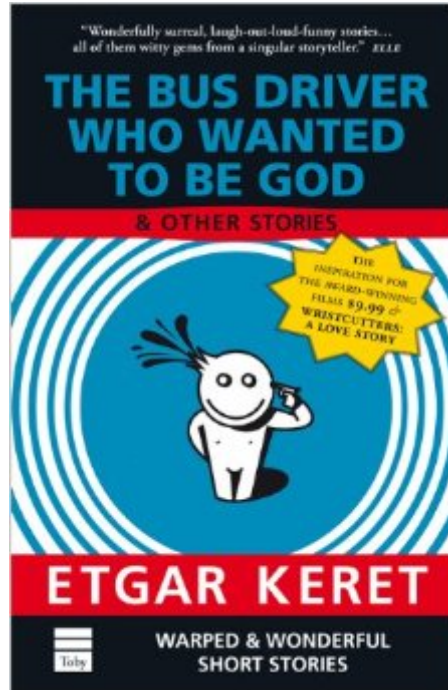


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# The Bus Driver Who Wanted To Be God & Other Stories



## Synopsis

Israel's hippest bestselling young writer today, Etgar Keret is part court jester, part literary crown prince, part national conscience. *The Bus Driver Who Wanted to Be God* gathers his daring and provocative short stories for the first time in English. Brief, intense, painfully funny, and shockingly honest, Keret's stories are snapshots that illuminate with intelligence and wit the hidden truths of life. As with the best comic authors, hilarity and anguish are the twin pillars of his work. Keret covers a remarkable emotional and narrative terrain—from a father's first lesson to his boy to a standoff between soldiers caught in the Middle East conflict to a slice of life where nothing much happens. *Bus Driver* includes stories from Keret's bestselling collections in Israel, *Pipelines* and *Missing Kissinger*, as well as Keret's major new novella, "Kneller's Happy Campers," a bitingly satirical yet wistful road trip set in the afterlife for suicides. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although wildly popular in his native Israel, this collection is the first of Keret's work to be published in the US. Two-thirds of the small book is given over to 22 equally small short stories, all ranging from 5-8 pages or so. These stories are difficult to characterize, although they generally feature alienated males (often children or teenagers), and the writing is universally deft and satirically witty with an underlying tone of irony and sorrow—occasionally drifting into unreality. Any description of them would not do them justice at all. I don't read enough American writers to think up a good

comparison, although I would say Keret shares some of Jonathan Lethem and Mark Jude Poirier's territory. However, what the stories more similar to is some of the short fiction that came out of Scotland in the early to mid-'90s from people like Gordon Legge, Duncan McLean, and James Kelman, who also write very brief stories. Perhaps most of all, the book bears comparison to the absurdist fables of another Scot, Magnus Mills (*All Quiet on the Orient Express*, *The Restraint of Beasts*, *Three To See The King*). The novella which occupies the final third of the book, "Kneller's Happy Campers", about the afterlife of those who commit suicide, is especially redolent of Mills' odd and affecting mix of black humor and fantasy. The collection is drawn and translated from Keret's bestselling collections in Israel, and one can only hope that more makes it into English and across the shores.

Etgar Keret takes the term "short story" very literally. The majority of the stories don't exceed four pages. Keret doesn't engage in excessive prose, he doesn't devote much energy to setting a scene. He punches you on the nose with a story, then runs away. In the hands of any other author, this technique could be problematic: It doesn't allow the reader to truly know or care about his characters, and the only atmosphere present is the brevity of Keret's style. But it works because he is a very skilled storyteller, more concerned with walloping the reader over the head with a message and a purpose than taking the time to pull you into another world. Each story is a fable, a fairy tale. The short length and lack of detail can prove to be misleading--these are very complicated, well-thought out stories. They don't take long to read, but it does require time and brain-power to comprehend them. A few stories fall flat. "Uterus," for instance. Sometimes I got the impression that something was lost in translation. But "The Bus Driver Who Wanted To Be God: & Other Stories" is a very satisfying collection, meaty in ideas if not physical heft.

This is one of my favorite books/authors! Each and every story grabs you by the seat of your pants/skirt and takes you on an ever unexpected journey. Etgar Keret is my author idol! If I could write even half as good as him, I'd be a best-seller!

I read this book in its Spanish translation before reading the English one -- they each read a bit differently but Keret's literary brilliance comes through in either: a forceful plunge into humanity's flaws.

Admittedly, I bought this book because I fell in love with the movie "Wristcutters A Love Story", and

after reading an excerpt of the short story "Kneller's Happy Campers" I had to have this book. It is amazing. Etgar Keret is the master of short stories. I could not put the book down and read it in an afternoon. I am constantly finding myself going back to the book to re-read some of the stories and I enjoy them more every time. This is a book I keep by my bedside and has quickly become a treasured possession.

Great series of stories, also included is 'Kneller's happy Campers', on which the film 'Wristcutters: a love story' is based, a nice longer form novella to balance the ultra-short format Keret has otherwise mastered.

I (along with what I believe to be most of the other people reviewing) bought this book because I really enjoyed the movie "Wristcutters: A Love Story." Let me say, I was NOT disappointed!!With the exception of Wristcutters, all of Keret's stories in the book are REALLY short, even in comparison to other short stories that I have read. While I was initially concerned that I would not enjoy such short stories, I found that my initial thoughts were mistaken, and I greatly appreciated their length. This book is really easy to pick up and read when you only have a few minutes to read- say before dinner or during a break at work.I found all of the stories agreeable, but would have to say that my favorite story was "The Bus Driver Who Wanted to be God." I thought that both characters in this story were extremely likable, and I found the story to be rather sweet. However, in some of the stories, I believe that the ideas presented would be more relatable to someone more familiar with Israeli culture than I.

Keret's stories are short, light on character and action and strewn with tiny observant details. Some of them are jaw-dropping, others fall flat.These absurd, skeletal stories are in tone and execution a lot like those of Donald Barthelme -- whose "The Class" is one of the most brilliant short stories of all time -- and Keret does for life in Israel what Barthelme did for life in America (if you haven't read Barthelme, start with "Sixty Stories") and along the way illuminates truths that cross cultural divides."Kneller's Happy Campers" was smoothed out, filled out and shaped into a coherent narrative by the makers of "Wristcutters: A Love Story", and it's a great movie. But Keret's story in the end can never be reduced to a movie; it is to be read and enjoyed on its own for its jazzy style, comedy, quirky observations and, ultimately, poignant humanity.Prepare not to like every story but to find revelations throughout.

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