



The Collected Fiction of Kenneth Koch

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“It’s lucky for us all that you’re holding Koch’s collected fiction in your hands right now. Koch’s seasons on our earth were blessed ones and these traces, some of them among his last, are gifts.”—Jonathan Lethem

Hilarious and profoundly moving, this volume restores to print all the fiction of the writer John Ashbery called “simply the best we have.” Koch, who once characterized New York School writing as about “the fullness and richness of possibility and excitement and happiness,” imbues his prose with humor, wit, and a beautifully tender exuberance. *The Collected Fiction of Kenneth Koch* is a must-read for anyone interested in discovering what American literature might still hope to be.

Published simultaneously with *The Collected Poems of Kenneth Koch* (Knopf), *Collected Fiction* includes Koch’s innocent and rambunctious novel *The Red Robins*, as well as *Hotel Lambosa*, his book of semi-autobiographical short pieces inspired equally by Hemingway’s Nick Adams stories and Yasunari Kawabata’s *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories*. Fans of Koch’s unparalleled gift for comic invention will turn immediately to “The New Orleans Stories,” a cycle about the family of a small-time criminal, published here for the first time along with “The Soviet Room,” a gentle story of requited love at the end of the Cold War. Koch’s previously uncollected work includes a warm-hearted parody of a children’s adventure narrative and a story detailing the mysteries uncovered by an obsessive postcard detective. Together, the work of Kenneth Koch opens up a wonderful world—one where the pursuit of happiness is taken very seriously indeed.

Kenneth Koch was born in Cincinnati and served in the South Pacific during World War II. A poet, playwright, novelist, and Columbia University professor, Koch also published several books about teaching and reading poetry, including the groundbreaking *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams*; *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?*; and *Making Your Own Days: The Pleasures of Reading and Writing Poetry*. He was the recipient of the Bollingen Prize and the Bobbitt Library of Congress Prize, a finalist for the National Book Award, and winner of the Phi Beta Kappa Poetry Award.

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