



The Smoking Book

Lesley Stern

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The Smoking Book is a dreamlike structure built on the solid foundation of two questions: how does it feel to smoke, and what does smoking mean? Lesley Stern, in an innovative, hybrid form of writing, muses on these questions through intersecting stories and essays that connect, expand, and contract like smoke rings floating through the air.

Stern writes of addictions and passionate attachments, of the body and bodily pleasure, of autobiography and cultural history. Smoking is Stern's seductive pretext, her way of entering unknown and mysterious regions. *The Smoking Book* begins with intimate and vivid accounts of growing up on a tobacco farm in colonial Rhodesia, reminiscences that permeate subsequent excursions into precolonial tobacco production and postcolonial life in Zimbabwe, as well as dramatic vignettes set in Australia, the United States, Scotland, Italy, Japan, and South America. Stern has written a book, at once intensely personal and kaleidoscopically international, that weaves the intimate act of a solitary person smoking a cigarette into a broad cultural picture of desire, exchange, fulfillment, and the acts that bind people together, either in lasting ways or through ephemeral encounters.

The Smoking Book is for anyone who has ever smoked or loved a smoker (against their better judgment); it is for those who have never smoked or for those who mourn the loss of cigarettes as they would grieve for a lost friend. But mostly, *The Smoking Book* is for all those who are smoldering still.

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