



# **A Boy's Book of Nervous Breakdowns: Stories (Yellow Shoe Fiction)**

*Tom Paine*

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The insightful and provocative stories in Tom Paine's collection spring from a series of seismic events that rocked the post-millennium world. News headlines from the last decade—the fall of Baghdad, the Occupy Wall Street movement, and the BP oil spill—not only inspire the settings but also raise ethical questions that percolate throughout this ominous and timely work.

A stark reminder of the challenges and resultant anxiety facing a global society, *A Boy's Book of Nervous Breakdowns* depicts the simultaneously dreamlike and brutally real experience of witnessing contemporary political and environmental catastrophes. Paine approaches the second U.S. invasion of Iraq through the eyes of a CBS radio journalist and her desperate Iraqi translator as they report the opening months of the attack and dodge danger with a newborn in tow. In other stories, a father blames global warming for the drowning death of his daughter and journeys by horseback across the last of the Montana glaciers; a Japanese reggae band struggles under the radioactive umbrella of the Fukushima nuclear disaster; and a genius at Goldman Sachs invents a money-making algorithm, then ends his days with a tribe of headhunters in the Amazon.

Paine masterfully orchestrates these episodic depictions of a failing civilization, however unnerving, through a wide array of perspectives, each tied to the other by Cassandra-like prophecies. Immediately compelling, *A Boy's Book of Nervous Breakdowns* confronts the harsh realities of our time with imaginative and moving vignettes that reinforce the fragility, greed, and heartache of the human condition.

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