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Renuka

By Stephen Alter

Penguin, New Delhi, India, 2008. Paperback. Book Condition: New. First Edition. "The friendship between Renuka, a Bengali poet, and Rachel, an American missionary, lies at the heart of this novel. Two women from entirely different backgrounds, they share a bond that overcomes the barriers of nationality, race and religion. Both are exiled to a hill station, which is populated with provincial and prudish memsahibs, who adjust their recipes to compensate for the altitude and substitute ingredients from home. While Rachel's husband works at a psychiatric hospital in the plains, in Ranchi, she looks after their sons who attend a mission school in the hills. While editing a cookbook, Rachel begins to realize the contradictions within her community. She also discovers the seductive voice of Renuka's poetry. Renuka, Stephen Alter's fourth novel, builds to a startling climax, while uncovering hidden truths about love, sexuality and passion. In Renuka, Alter has drawn a remarkable portrait of a totally credible woman he captures exactly the love-hate attitudes of Westerners who spend time in the subcontinent. A rare achievement to use a simple framework so effectively. Sarah Curtis, Times Literary Supplement. Renuka is a most accomplished, utterly convincing study of two women of different backgrounds...



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-- **Dominic Collins**

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