



Neglected Lives

Stephen Alter

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Lionel arrives in Debrakot on horseback, escaping a reckless love affair in Lucknow. Brigadier and Mrs. Augden take him into their home; the picturesque surroundings help Lionel find a measure of peace, though he finds himself trapped within an isolated, aging Anglo-Indian community who struggle with ghosts of the British Raj. He discovers troubling secrets of personal history, questions that arise from a legacy of mixed parentage, and encounters disturbing and fascinating characters like Farleigh, an eccentric recluse who raises leeches, and Salim, the overweight heir to a decrepit hotel. Stephen Alter's debut novel, *Neglected Lives*, was first published in 1978. It remains an elegiac work of fiction that leads us into a part of India that is seldom visited. Told through the voices of different characters, this story explores themes of identity, love, and youth, weaving together moments of violence and tenderness to create a resilient fabric of human experience. *Neglected Lives* is a short novel of unusual and exquisite quality. Mr. Alter has a rare narrative zest, a surging feeling for the physical world, a strongly individual grasp of character, and an agreeable bite of wit. The New Yorker Paul Scott, Ruth Jhabvala, and Kaye Stebbins are by no means out of place in this company. Daily Telegraph (London) books by Stephen Alter: Renuka, *Neglected Lives*, Amritsar to Lahore: Crossing the Border between India and Pakistan, All the Way to Heaven: An American Boyhood in the Himalayas, Sacred Waters: A Pilgrimage to the Many Sources of the Ganga, Elephas Maximus: A Portrait of the Indian Elephant, Fantasies of a Bollywood Love Thief: Inside the World of Indian Movie-making, The Penguin Book of Modern Indian Short Stories (co-edited). *Neglected Lives* depicts a hill station and its residents on the decline, reminding one of Paul Scott's *Staying on*. Ruskin Bond.

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