



## Loot and Other Stories

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The title story “Loot” is a fable depicting a natural catastrophe, the looting that results when people grab haphazardly, and the futility of all that grabbing after material goods. The “loot” in the rest of the collection isn’t always something material. It could be a lover as in “The Diamond Mine” when a soldier takes advantage of a young girl, then disappears from her life. The looting can have widespread effects as in “The Generation Gap,” where the whole family is disrupted by a father’s adultery.

In “Mission Statement,” the “loot” could be considered a black man’s suave appropriation of a female development agency official on a “mission” in his country. Or it could be her taking him as her lover and flourishing as she basks in his regard only to leave him when her inevitable transfer occurs.

The hired killer of “Homage” takes the “loot” of his paid assassination of an esteemed leader. Paid only half of his promised fee, he has been taken by those who hired him and so easily erased his identity. He participates in this erasure, bringing roses to the slain man’s memorial, the killer paying homage to the killed.

“Karma” concludes the volume. In this multi-part story, the “loot” is the Cape Dutch gable house that the married couple acquire, and then all the things that go with it, including status, a fancy car, foreign travel. At the root of all this is corruption which leads to a downfall. The new owners of the house are black. They, too, get to participate in the “looting.” With different narrators and stories that sometimes intersect, “Karma” shows readers that Nadine Gordimer is the master of superb storytelling.

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