



## Short Cuts

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SHORT CUTS resembles Altman's cult classic NASHVILLE (1975), which also interweaves the stories of numerous characters who are mostly strangers to one another. SHORT CUTS enjoyed only modest box-office success because Carver is not well known to the masses and the actors, with the exception of Jack Lemmon, are not major stars.

The film offended some purists who objected to the liberties Altman took in order to achieve the "mosaic" effect he wanted. For example, he spirited Carver's characters to Los Angeles, a city not even situated in "Carver Country." The film by itself, however, is an impressive work of cinematic art which enhances Altman's distinguished reputation while introducing the late Raymond Carver to a wider audience.

The stories brought together in the volume include some of Carver's best and most "Carveresque." "Neighbors" describes the kinky behavior of a couple supposedly taking care of an apartment while friends are away. In "So Much Water So Close to Home," four men discover a murdered woman's nude body in the river but do not report it until they have finished their three-day fishing trip. "A Small, Good Thing" concerns a boy fatally injured by a hit-and-run driver on the morning of his birthday.

"Lemonade" is a fairly typical Carver poem without rhyme, meter, or poetic rhetoric. It describes a father's grief over the death of his son and is written in the author's characteristic low-key, conversational manner, helplessly commiserating while conspicuously shunning the kinds of speculations and epiphanies contained in such elegies as John Milton's "Lycidas" (1637), Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Adonais" (1821), and Alfred Tennyson's "In Memoriam" (1850).

In his introduction, Altman explains how his film came to be made and offers as good an interpretation of Carver as has yet been published: "I look at all of Carver's work as just one story, for his stories are all occurrences, all about things that just happen to people and cause their lives to take a turn."

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