



Cover Before Striking

Priscila Uppal

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The most common phrase in print is "cover before striking," a warning to those about to innocently strike a match to be careful not to burn their fingers.

Uppal's characters in *Cover Before Striking* are all people pushing their lives to new levels of intensity, danger, or passion as they test their limits and those of the world. The pyromaniac at the heart of the title story — winner of the Gloria Vanderbilt Short Fiction Prize — desperately uses fire to reconnect with lost lovers and family members. In "Vertigo," an injured Olympic athlete becomes a research guinea pig in a surreal scientific experiment. In "The Boy Next Door," a teenager recounts how her mother took her and fled Canada for Brazil, along with the local Catholic priest.

Implacable and just a little unhinged, the stories of *Cover Before Striking* each move toward that moment of contact when the sparks begin to fly, when destruction and beauty seem to blur together. With this collection, Priscila Uppal offers the literary equivalent of playing with fire.

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