



The Best Place on Earth: Stories

Ayelet Tsabari

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Reminiscent of the early work of Jhumpa Lahiri, Ayelet Tsabari's award-winning debut collection of stories is global in scope yet intimate in feel, beautifully written, and emotionally powerful. From Israel to India to Canada, Tsabari's indelible characters grapple with love, violence, faith, the slipperiness of identity, and the challenges of balancing old traditions with modern times.

These eleven spellbinding stories often focus on Israel's Mizrahi Jews, featuring mothers and children, soldiers and bohemians, lovers and best friends, all searching for their place in the world. In "Tikkun," a man crosses paths with his free-spirited ex-girlfriend—now a married Orthodox Jew—and minutes later barely escapes tragedy. In "Brit Milah," a mother travels from Israel to visit her daughter in Canada and is stunned by her grandson's upbringing. A young medic in the Israeli army bends the rules to potentially dangerous consequence in "Casualties." After her mom passes away, a teenage girl comes to live with her aunt outside Tel Aviv and has her first experience with unrequited love in "Say It Again, Say Something Else." And in the moving title story, two estranged sisters—one whose marriage is ending, the other whose relationship is just beginning—try to recapture the close bond they had as kids.

Absorbing, tender, and sharply observed, *The Best Place on Earth* infuses moments of sorrow with small moments of grace: a boy composes poetry in a bomb shelter, an old photo helps a girl make sense of her mother's rootless past. Tsabari's voice is gentle yet wise, illuminating the burdens of history, the strength of the heart, and our universal desire to belong.

Praise for *The Best Place on Earth*

"It's impossible not to be awestruck by the depth and power rendered in Tsabari's stories."—*Elle*

"Tsabari creates complex, conflicted, prickly people you'll want to get to know better."—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"There's remarkable scope in Ayelet Tsabari's *The Best Place on Earth*, which interweaves stories of discrimination, loss, displacement, sex, death, religion, and a host of other issues. And yet, despite the range of viewpoints and the different facets of Israeli society explored, this is a collection that always stays intensely personal, the broader forces of history moving not merely across nations but within the souls of her beautifully conceived characters."—**Phil Klay, National Book Award-winning author of *Redeployment***

"With incredible compassion and a delicate touch, Ayelet Tsabari explores the heartbreak inherent in forming bonds, whether with another person or with a whole country. *The Best Place on Earth*, a complicated love song to Israel, is a sure-footed and stunningly skillful debut."—**Shelly Oria, author of *New York 1, Tel Aviv 0***

"Powerful . . . brilliant . . . These stories . . . depict minorities so skillfully, with such a light and accurate touch."—*The Daily Beast*

"Highly recommended . . . Compelling and compassionate; [Tsabari's stories] speak out from the heart of Israeli society and experiences. . . . The stories of *The Best Place on Earth* leave you wishing they wouldn't

end.”—*The Times of Israel*

“This short story collection is a fiction debut for Tsabari, but it demonstrates that she is already a talented storyteller. . . . Her writing has an immediacy and power that invites readers into her characters’ psyches.”—*Publishers Weekly*

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