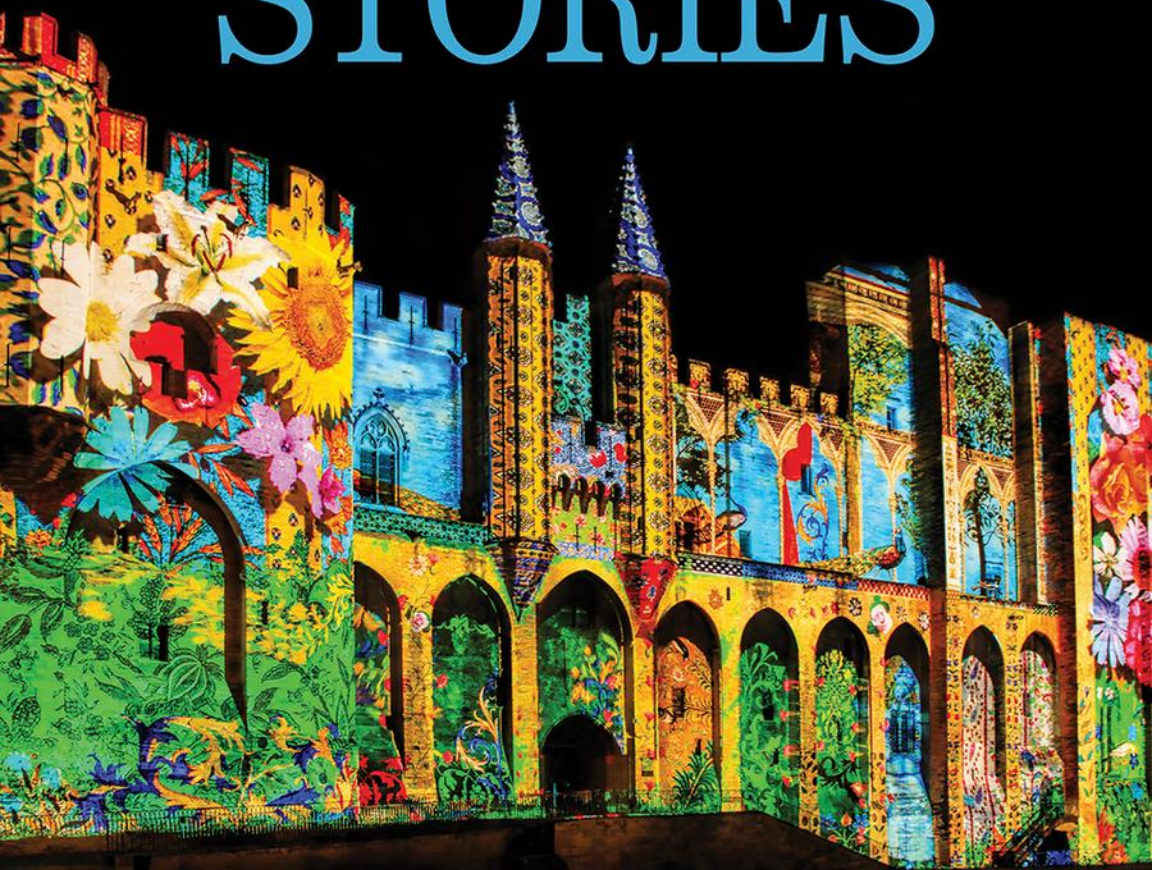


MORE LOVE STORIES



CHARLES MEE



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INTRODUCTION

Some people do become President or get completely taken-up with making a fortune, but for most of us life is birth, love, and death - that's all the facts.

And it turns out there is more than one love story, or even one kind of love story, on the planet earth.

As we are told by Wikipedia, there are all sorts of thoughts all over the world about what love is. It might be thought of as lust or affection or strong attraction, as pleasure, as kindness, as compassion, as a facilitator of interpersonal relationships, as the motive of concern for the good of another, for care, as close friendship, as the release of the chemicals of dopamine, serotonin, amphetamine, as something defined by psychometrics, as something the Greeks called eros or philia or agape, or as something Confucius thought was *Ren*, of the Chinese philosopher Mozi thought was *Ai* or what the Japanese speak of as *Koi*, or what the Persians are talking about when they speak of Rumi or Hafiz or Sa'di. As Virgil said, "love conquers all." Or as the Beatles said, "All You Need Is Love." As Thomas Aquinas said, love is "to will the good of another." Or as Gottfried Leibniz said, love is "to be delighted by the happiness of another."

Here, in this collection of plays, there are love stories in an amusement park, and in a tunnel of love, and just in bed - all full of the complexities of what it is to be a human being.

And then there is the one that I wrote with my friend, the great Shakespeare scholar Stephen Greenblatt. A few years ago, Stephen answered the phone and was told by the Mellon Foundation that he had been given the million dollar grant they give to ultra-distinguished scholars who haven't even applied for it, in case there is something else they would like to do with their lives. And Stephen called me and said he was doing what he wanted to do with his life, but he would like to watch me write a play. And I said I thought that would be too boring for him to sit next to me and watch my fingers on the keyboard, but if he would want to write a play WITH me that would be fun - and, I said, there must be a lost play of Shakespeare's that we could do. Of course, he said: Cardenio.

And so Stephen and I got together, looked up the passage in Cervantes's *Don Quixote* on which Shakespeare had based the

lost play, Stephen rented a house in Italy, in the hills of Umbria, since Shakespeare liked to set some of his romantic plays there, and he brought along his wife and son, and we went to Italy and chatted over breakfast - the best one-on-one tutorial anyone has ever had about how Shakespeare wrote his plays - and wandered around Umbria in the afternoons, and wrote Cardenio. And then, because Stephen is also a big believer in cultural mobility, he commissioned some theaters around the world to take our play and do their own adaptations. The only rule was that the theaters needed to do versions that were suited to their own histories and cultures. And so versions of our Cardenio were done in Brazil, Croatia, Egypt, India, Japan, Poland, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, and Turkey.

All this is consistent, too, with my feeling that, in casting my plays, any of the roles can be played by an actor of any race or gender, of any age with any disability, that the actors and director can choose to change the gender of any character, or have an all-female cast or an all-male cast or transgender actors in the cast and just change whatever they want in the text to accommodate those casting choices, so that the cast of the play resembles the population of the world.

All of this open casting is easy to do in Adam and Evie, a play about a young couple in love wandering around the world seeing other couples in love and maybe picking up some hints about what they might do in their relationship with one another, or just take pleasure in seeing what life is like for others - because love, caring for another, compassion, respect for the other, social love, all this is what surviving in civilization - that is to say, what life - is all about.