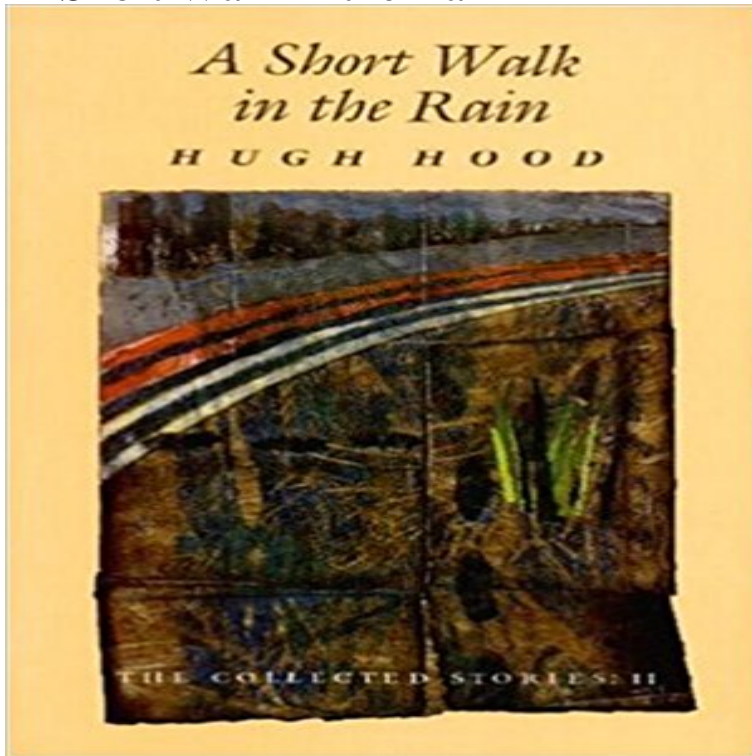


A Short Walk in the Rain



For a writer who once professed 'If in the course of my life I can get half a dozen stories printed, Ill be satisfied, *Flying a Red Kite* (1962) marked the start of a very much more productive career. A new edition of that title, released by the Porcupines Quill in 1987, formed volume one of a proposed 'Collected Stories. *A Short Walk in the Rain* (Volume Two) includes thirteen stories written between 1957 and 1961, which for one reason or another were left out of *Red Kite*, and which have never since been published. They include five of what the author delicately calls 'instructive artistic failures, two 'interesting failed tries and half a dozen 'unpretentious successes which Hood would rank with anything in *Flying a Red Kite*. The title story (one of the successes) is the first story Hood wrote, in January 1957. The author would admit it is derivative -- he was certainly aware at the time that the final action of *A Farewell to Arms* consisted of a short walk in the rain, and he came to realize later that its title was an exact metrical echo of *The Old Man and the Sea* -- an iamb, a single heavily-stressed syllable and an anapest, but that is the point. What Hood tries to demonstrate in this book is something of the process by which he started to emulate the masters and somewhere along the way found the voice to write accomplished fiction in his own style. The last story in this collection, 'From the Fields of Sleep was written in August 1961. It has all of Hoods trademarks -- a title from the 'Immortality Ode, insistent use of bright colour imagery, and the use of an indirect free style which hovers between the first and third person, allowing the narrative to move from mimetic description to something pretty close to interior monologue. There is also a fascination with death and dying and the gradual emergence from terror through hope to final exhilaration. It is odd that 'From the Fields

of Sleep was written just a month after Hood wrote `Flying a Red Kite, perhaps his most famous story, and yet `From the Fields has never yet been published. Apart from its literary-historical and writing-craft interest, A Short Walk in the Rain demonstrates the authors firm commitment to Roman Catholicism and portrays two of the enduring social institutions, the Church and the University, as they were in Quebec of the 1960s.

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