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UNLIKELY STORIES

★ INCLUDES *MADemoiselle ZUMA CHRONICLES*



V. SUBHASH

PREVIEW COPY

UNLIKELY STORIES

★ INCLUDES *MADMOISELLE ZUMA CHRONICLES*

FULL-COLOUR
2ND
EDITION



V. SUBHASH

UNLIKELY STORIES

Written, illustrated & designed by

V. Subhash
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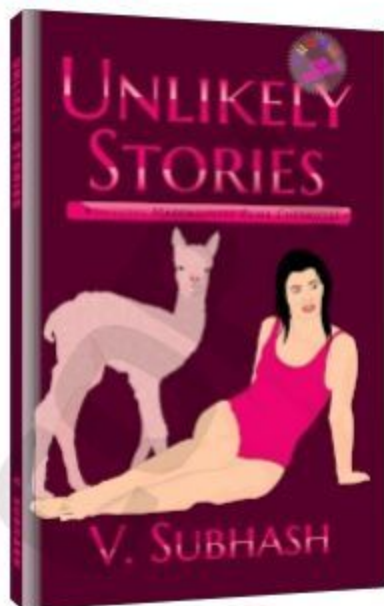
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Disclaimer

This book is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to real persons, ghosts, evil spirits, monsters or aliens is entirely coincidental and strictly unintentional.

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Preface

I think I have read all kinds of fiction, except romantic fiction. Thanks to my school library, I had read almost every English classic novel that was abridged by S.E. Paces and published by *S. Chand & Sons*. After my 10th final exam, I became a member of a lending library in my hometown. When I visited the place for the first time, the librarian introduced me to various genres of novels. He then asked me if I was interested in crime fiction. I did not want him to think that I was criminally inclined so I said no. He then showed me a rack with Enid Blyton and Carolyn Keene books. *Nancy Drew* mysteries (from the 80s) were difficult to lay my hands on in the school library but here they were so many of them without any competition. I began with *Nancy Drew*, moved on to *Hardy Boys*, and then to Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* and *Secret Seven*. One day, I found Erle Stanley Gardner among these books and became interested in crime fiction again. (I had already read a huge volume containing all Sherlock Holmes stories from the school library. I can also say I have read almost all short stories of Mark Twain and H. H. Munro (*Saki*), thanks to similar volumes of their complete works.) I then began reading Sidney Sheldon, Jeffrey Archer and some other high-demand authors. Their books were almost never on the shelves so one day I was looking for a new author. Then, I found a rack with James Hadley Chase books. In all his novels, there was a skimpily clad woman on the cover. There was no connection between the story and the cover. But, the covers sold tens of thousands of these books in India. My fiction books will try to imitate this style.

One day, I found a book in the school library that steered me towards non-fiction. I am not sure if it was *Up from slavery* by Booker T. Washington or *My experiments with truth* by MK Gandhi. Autobiographies had the drama that fiction books usually provided and the valuable information that non-fiction books usually provided. Eventually, I stopped reading fiction. The only fiction book that I had read in last two decades is the *Diary of a social butterfly* by Pakistani satirical columnist Moni Mohsin. It is a collection of her weekly articles in *The Friday Times* written around actual political events in Pakistan. I have followed her style in this book. No explanations to explain local stuff to foreigners. (Their guess is as good as mine.) A lot of Indian authors bend over backwards trying to cater to foreign readers. Their awkward explanations interrupt the flow and destroy the authenticity of the narration.

In 2020, I started publishing books and almost all of my titles were non-fiction. (There is one book of illustrated Aesop's fables whose endings I had changed with a humorous twist.) In 2022, I ran out of hobbies or interests to base my next book. Meanwhile, I had become a fan of 80s movies, particularly horror and comedy movies, from around the world. (The 80s seems to have been a decade of creative explosion in music and films.) Their politically incorrect *laissez-faire* approach to entertainment greatly appeals to me. Some of these horror movies gave me unusually vivid nightmares. For the next few days, I would try to recollect as much detail from the dreams. A few have made into this book.

The main story has two endings. The first one is that the lead pair live happily ever after. The second one is a parody of the controversy over *Men Writing Women*. (Apparently, a lot of male authors derive their knowledge of the female body from Japanese anime. That is what happens when a society eats too much soy.) Not related to this, I have written into the main story some important information about health and well-being that young people need to be aware of before they embark on life's journey as an adult.

Like a good Indian masala film, this novel combines several genres — action, fantasy, supernatural, paranormal, sci-fi, contemporary, humour and horror. It will appeal to anyone anywhere above the age of 18.

In 2023, I added a few more stories and removed most of the woke-toxic content. As this second edition is all-colour, the page count had to be limited. I have a separate pseudonym for my political cartoons and satirical stuff so there is no need to raise the hackles with my real name too. However, the first edition will continue to be available for those who want it. This edition is for pure entertainment.

V. Subhash
Kerala, INDIA
June 2023

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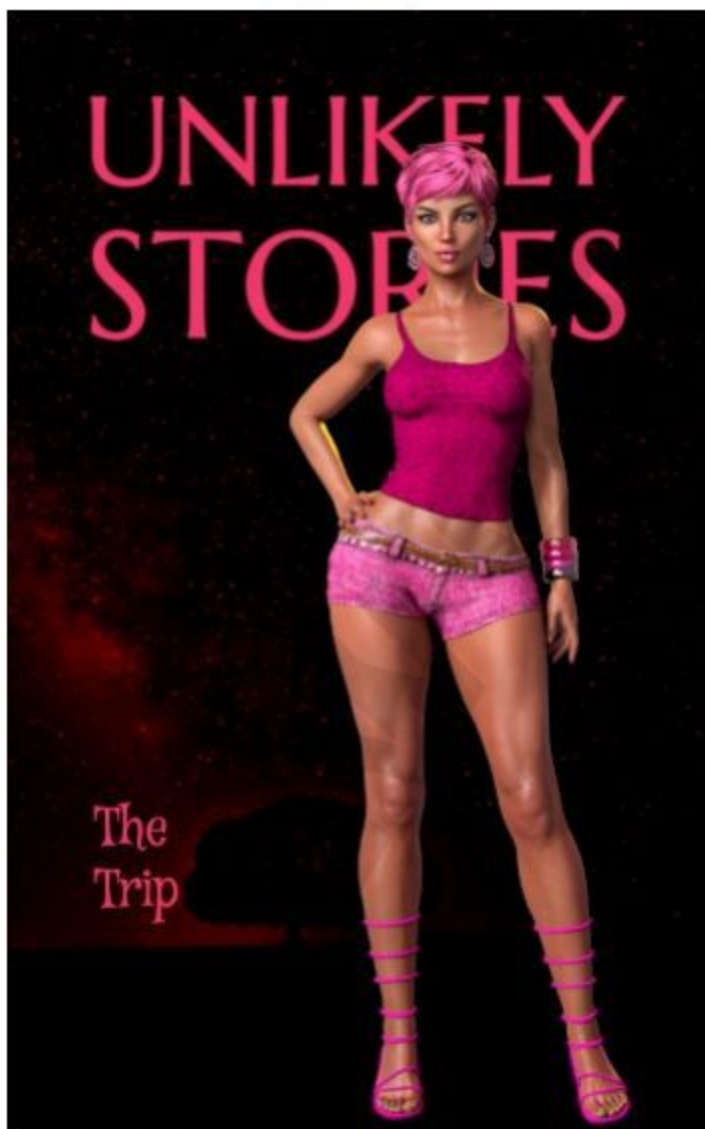
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Warning

Several sensitivity readers killed themselves while reviewing this book so we do not know if it has any unidentified triggers. We wish all sensitive readers rest in peace.

The Trip



My friend got a new SUV. As he desperately wanted to prove its usefulness to his wife, he decided to take his family to some faraway beach resort. He invited me to accompany them during the weekend. I will be the fifth person inside the vehicle after the four from his family. Some friend of his wife worked at the resort and offered them a massive discount. My friend thought his new expensive ride could benefit from a long-distance test drive and decided to take up on the offer. I was doing nothing on the weekend except wash clothes so I didn't mind going with them.

"You will take care of the transport, the accommodation and the food?"

"I will."

“And, I’m not being set up for some elaborate sales pitch?”

“No. Why do you think I’m going to do that?”

“Well, your past history makes me suspicious. My father still complains about the teak units you sold him. The last time I spoke to him, he specifically told me not to have ANY relationship with you... not even speaking to you.”

“Fine. No sales pitch.”

“You are not in any financial mess, are you? Are you planning to borrow money from me?”

“Would I buy a new SUV if I had money problems?”

“A new SUV? I don’t know, man. I don’t know how many but lots of people have told me... they were just casually talking to someone... someone like you... who claimed to be very rich... but by the end of the day their kitchen was full of unbreakable plastic containers and they had to start sleeping on a magnetic bed! Are you sure this is not part of a multi-level marketing operation?”

“No!”

“Well, I will tell you at the outset that I DO NOT HAVE ANY MONEY. I don’t want to you to be disappointed to learn that later. All my money is in stocks and tax-saving fixed deposits. Banks will not let anyone close such deposits before five years. I cannot sell the shares because the market is down.”

This guy was my best friend in the last few years of school and a few years afterwards. I do not trust him. His family went through some serious financial and health problems while we were in school. My family also had financial problems but he started looking for a job much earlier than I did. When I was still studying, he was selling teak farm units, goat farm units, chits, real estate... anything else you can possibly imagine. He pitched these things to everyone else but me because he knew I would say no. Even though, I had chosen the science group, I was more financially savvy than my classmates who had chosen the commerce group... Actually, this was what I claimed then. The reality was that I used to read the business section of the newspaper every day. I was just more aware of what was actually happening in the financial world. Theoretically, I was weak until I did my graduation in business administration. Whatever the case, nobody sold snake-oil products to me!

One day, after I had left for my computer class, he came to my home — knowing fully well that I would not be there. He enquired if I was there and my father innocently fell into the trap of asking what he was doing. Before the talk was over, my father was poorer by two-and-half grand.

This guy is a born salesman. He can sell anything to anybody. It was not gift of gab or some actual sales/marketing talent that made him successful. He had some paranormal psychic power that he did not realize he had or could consciously control. Most people just lost their mental resistance to anything he said. Any traditional reserve or natural scepticism they would normally have just vanished when he spoke to them. They thought he was honest and did whatever he asked them. It was as if he cast a magic spell.

I have met just one more guy like him. This other guy was not psychic or anything. He had the gift of gab and real sales/marketing talent. My computer centre wanted to organize an annual cricket match, and he went and collected sponsorships of over one hundred grand from big brands like Pepsi and MRF!

I have not met anybody else like these two guys. The second guy left my life when I left the computer centre. The first guy came back when he moved to my city recently. Unfortunately, he was on the *other* side of the city. So, for six months, we had not met. Now, he wants to see me.

I have plenty of money in my bank account but I was not going to admit that to him. The market was down but only two of my shares were down. If I sold my entire portfolio today, I will be making several times the amount I had invested. I had written a book on investing in stocks. He had not shown any interest in any of my books. Now, I am thankful for it.

Besides, he had told one another friend of ours that I was the most careful person with money when compared to everyone else in our friends circle. This was because I did not spend much and I made sure that anyone who owed me money paid me back every rupee. Even if this was not always true, I decided to live up to their expectations... in my dealings with them, that is.

I am not paranoid about MLM. Several people had complained to me how they had lost a lot of money buying unwanted products. They said these MLM guys were impossible to get rid off. You had to buy their overpriced products or they would not go. Just a few months back, I

was shopping at a supermarket and a well-dressed guy accosted me and tried to shake my hands. He said he had forgotten my name and promised to call me after he recalled it. I have had several people tell me about my living doppelgängers so I gave him my phone number like an idiot. Several weeks later, he called me and recalled our meeting. He then proceeded to ask me if I was interested in a richly rewarding lifestyle change or something like that. I asked him if it was about MLM and he confessed it was. End of conversation. I could not believe someone would go to such elaborate lengths to set up a sales pitch.

Anyway, my concerns about the trip were now alleviated and I was on my way to his home. This would be the first time I will be seeing his wife or his kids. I had attended his wedding. From that event, I remember a priest who had a two-wheeler vehicle without a license plate. But, for the life of me, I could not recall how his wife looked.

He asked me to be at his place by 7 but we did not leave until an hour late. We were also stuck in traffic for an hour. It was a Friday evening so half the people in the city were leaving for their home away from home. By the time we left the rush hour traffic, it was clear that we would not be hitting the bed before midnight.

My friend has two kids. A girl aged six and a boy aged seven. They are studying in a good school and they seem smart... smarter than their father was when he was in school.

His wife was riding shotgun because the kids wanted to sit with me. I asked my friend about the car or jeep or whatever the thing it was. And, he said it was a 2-litre diesel and that it had four-wheel drive. Other than that, he knew nothing, not even the mileage. I think the mileage is very low and he did not have the courage to admit that before his wife.

I asked the kids what they wanted to do when they grew up. The boy said he wanted to be a star in some TV song competition and the girl said she wanted to be like some Youtuber. That's it, guys! There is no future. We are doomed as a species.

"That's it. We are doomed. Our species is doomed," I said.

"They are watching TV all the time. This is what they have in their heads now. They will grow out of it," his wife said hopefully.

"When we were kids, we saw movies and thought the doctors had it good. We all wanted to be doctors."

"Yes, doctors and engineers."

"There was of course some rare girl or boy who wanted to be an astronaut..."

"I want to be an astronaut," said the boy.

"I want to be an astronaut," said the girl.

"Now, you guys want to be astronauts?"

Both nodded.

"Do you know what astronauts eat? Hmm? Hmm?" I asked both of them.

Both shook their head.

"Food paste!"

Both kids screamed and their parents chuckled.

"In space, there is no gravity. So, you cannot prepare or eat food like you do on Earth. They put their food as a semi-solid paste in barrels and take them to space. When they get hungry they, they stick a tube in the barrel and suck on it."

"Yuck!"

"Eeew!"

"You think that is revolting? Wait till you hear how they get their water?"

"Oh, no!"

"Do you know where they get their water from?"

"Hey," I asked my friend, "do you know where they get their water?"

"I think you are going to say urine..."

"Just urine?"

"Nooooooooo!" both kids screamed.

"They squeeze every ounce of water out of everything, not just urine, my friend!"

"Now, who wants to be an astronaut?"

The girl pursed her lips. The boy shook his head.

"You can be a doctor or an accountant..."

"I will be a doctor."

"Me too."

"Doctor, really? Sick people, diseases, wounds, pus, fever, blood, urine, vomit, crap..."

"I don't want to be a doctor."

"No-uh!"

"You can get into computers and invest the money you get from it in stocks."

"I'm going to be a software engineer."

"Me too."

"Is it really true about the water?" my friend's wife asked.

"Yes, it is. What is even more disgusting is..."

"Here we go again," my friend said.

"... is that after they have squeezed out all the moisture, they pack the remaining filth into plastic containers and throw them out."

"Really?"

"I wonder if these containers are also emblazoned with the NASA logo. Maybe they have to write the current date on the label before they fling them out into space."

"Imagine some aliens coming near our planet and finding these containers. What will they think of us?"

"No wonder we are alone in the universe."

"So, Americans are like us when they go to space? Keep the house clean and throw the garbage out into the streets."

"Exactly."



We were nearing the resort when we decided to ask for directions. We stopped at a small shop. It was very isolated and the place gave me the creeps. The shop was part of a larger house. There was no one at the counter. The door to the house was closed. Somewhere in the inner rooms, a man and a woman could be heard yelling at each other. Suddenly, there was a crash and then silence. I looked at my friend and he also seemed to have no idea what to do. I pressed the bell. There was no answer. I checked the freezer for icecream even though it was close to midnight. The freezer was locked. A man came out of the house after an interminable delay. We bought some drinks and then asked for directions to the resort. The man said we need to go along the road for another half hour before we will see a large signboard identifying the resort. The kids wanted to sleep and my friend's wife climbed on to the backseat. I rode shotgun.

After about twenty minutes, I asked, "Did you notice something strange at that shop?"

"No, did you?"

"Do you think your kids are asleep?"

"Maybe." He turned and turned back, "Yeah, they are. What's with the shop?"

"Didn't you look in the freezer?"

"What was in the freezer?"

"The dead body!"

Both kids started screaming and their mother joined in too for some good measure. My friend braked.

"So, you guys were not really sleeping, were you? I didn't think so."

The boy scowled and the girl tried to hit at me.

"I think we have reached the resort. We need to check in and find our rooms."



At the check-in, my friend wrote all our names and that of another person. I asked him who

it was and he said another one of his wife's friends will be joining us tomorrow.

"How come your wife still has so many friends?"

"Why not?"

"Don't they know she is married to you?"

"What's wrong with me?"

"Wrong with you?"

"Yeah, what is wrong with me?"

"Have you forgotten the love letters?"

"What love letters?"

"Yes, what love letters?"

This was his wife. She came out of nowhere!

"I have published some love letters in my book."

"You wrote a jokebook and there is no love in it. The breakup jokes were titled as 'romantic jokes'."

I used to read Moni Mohsin's *Diary of a social butterfly* when I travelled. Each story in the book was self-contained. It did not matter how many times I read them, they always seemed fresh. Now, I read my own book. It is one of the biggest jokebooks of all time. Whatever chapter or page I randomly pick to read during my travels, it always seems fresh. I never lose an opportunity to make someone read the book. I picked out a page and pointed where she had to read. She shook her head, exhaled and started reading loudly.

Billet-doux

Darling,

Most worthy of your estimation after a long consideration and much meditation, I have a strong inclination to become your relation. As for my education and qualification it is not exaggeration or fabrication that I have passed matriculation with very little preparation. What do you say to the solemnisation of our marriage celebration according to the regulations, to the glorification of the modern civilization...

"I don't think this is what you were talking about."

"Of course, not. I never lose a chance to make others read my book."

"What is this 'love letters' about? Tell me. Tell the truth."

"What are you afraid about? You have two kids. He is condemned for life. You still don't trust him? If he does something wrong, I will break his bones and then tell you. You are like my sister. You have nothing to be afraid of."

"I hope so... brother," she said sarcastically and prepared to leave.

My friend picked up the remaining bags and started to leave too. At the door, he turned and said, "I will kill you tomorrow."

"See if you live today."

When I was a kid, we used to have a cat. On some mornings, it used to sleep on my chest. The cat is a tiny animal and its heart beats really fast. It sounds almost like a motor. In my dreams, I would start hearing this sound. I would believe that it was my own heart was making this noise. The sound would start slowly, pick up pace and maintain a steady hum. I would then panic and open my eyes. It was then I would find that it was our cat was making this sound, not my heart. Whenever this happened, it was a terrible experience. The cat looked like it was meditating, not sleeping. Its posture was that of the Egyptian Sphinx. The only difference was that our cat's eyes were closed.

I had a similar experience today. It was not a cat but the kids. They were sitting on the bed next to me and waiting for me get up. When I opened my eyes, I saw two heads silently watching me sleep.

Usually, I get up before daybreak. But, today, because of the late arrival, I slept past my internal alarm. I asked the kids what they were doing there and they wanted me to tell a scary story like I did the previous night. I told the kids I needed an hour to freshen up and take breakfast. I told them I am not telling any stories on an empty stomach and asked them to

scram.



The cottage was on the beach but quite some distance from the beach, almost a kilometre. It had a kitchen but we were going to take the meals at the check-in place, which also had a grocery store and a restaurant. This place served several other seaside cottages in the resort.

My friend and his family had already had their breakfast. I showered, changed clothes and went to the restaurant. When my friend saw that I was up, he left his kids with me. He and his wife were going to a nearby railway station to pick up the *other woman*.

I had a masala dosa, a pongal and a vada-sambar because I was past my usual breakfast time and very hungry. Then, I took a coffee and started to read the newspaper. The kids did not let me read though. They were fighting with each other and damaging the resort property. I had to get them out.

“Come on, kids. Let’s go to the beach.”

At the beach, I surveyed the scene. There were a few fishing boats from nearby villages on the far sea but none on the shore. The coast was clear. We had come in the off-season. There was a big but lonely tree on the beach with a lot of shade under it. I thought that if we brought some furniture from the cottage lawn, we could spend all day under the tree, so close to the beach, rather than holed up inside the cottage. I told the kids of my plan. They were excited about it and we set about to find some chairs.

At the cottage, we found some lightweight foldable chaise lounges. I picked two and the kids picked one. I had to carry all three chairs because the kids became tired in no time. I spent some time stabilizing the lounge chairs. After that, the kids were having fun on their own. After half an hour, the boy wanted to go for a swim and I wanted to wait till it was noon. I just wanted to lie there and read my book. I went back to the cottage and got my book. I read maybe one line and almost immediately fell asleep.

I must have been out for hours because the Sun was almost in the middle of the sky when I woke up. The kids seemed to have returned to the cottage. I went for a swim alone and returned to the cottage for a shower. I went to the kitchen to see if the kids had returned safely. There, everyone including the new girl and the kids were eating some kind of fruit. My friend’s wife introduced me to her and said I was also a writer. I went through the ‘oh really’, ‘no, not really’ and ‘don’t be modest’ routine for the nth time in my sorry life.

On the way back from the station, they had bought a jackfruit. My friend had cut it open with some difficulty but now everyone was eating the fruit. Their stock was already running low and I did not eat what they offered. I took the other half of the jackfruit outside. I said there was no room at the kitchen table and I did not want the knife to slip. My real reason was more selfish. Before you cut a jackfruit, you need to rub some edible oil on your hands and the knife. Otherwise, the sticky sap in the centre of the jackfruit will stick to the knife and make it difficult to cut into the fruit. The sticky sap will also stick to your fingers and anything you touch. Oil eliminates the problem. Besides that, a jackfruit releases strong odours, which are difficult to get rid off. After discretely applying the oil on my hands and a knife, I took the remainder of the jackfruit outside. I started removing the lobes from the jackfruit for my own exclusive consumption. I was not going to eat them now. I wanted to take them at lunch and later on the beach.

My friend accompanied me after a while. The kids had mentioned about the chaise lounges and the women went to inspect them.

“So, do you like the werewolf?”

“What wolf?” as I cut through the jackfruit.

“My wife’s friend.”

“Why do you say she is a wolf?”

“Didn’t you see her teeth?”

“What teeth?”

“She had dental surgery to make them look like fangs.”

“I didn’t see it.”

“She also had full-body tattoos. She used a laser procedure to remove them. You can still see them if you look closely.”

"Did you look closely?"

"I did."

"I will ask your wife about that."

"The tattoos?"

"How closely you looked."

"So, what do you think about her?"

"I don't know. She seems all right to me."

"Not like a werewolf?"

"What's wrong with you? Since when do we make fun of beautiful girls? You have changed after you got married."

"You think she is still beautiful?"

"Maybe. Maybe not. Why are you so interested? Did your wife put you on this errand?"

"No!" he claimed and left. A few minutes later, he sent his kids to be with me. I went to lunch with them. I'm stuck with the kids now. How did I become their nanny?

After we finished lunch, we went to the beach again. My friend and the women were relaxing on our chairs but they left immediately for lunch after we joined them. I was eating from my fruit stash when my friend's wife came to take away the kids. It was their post-lunch nap time.

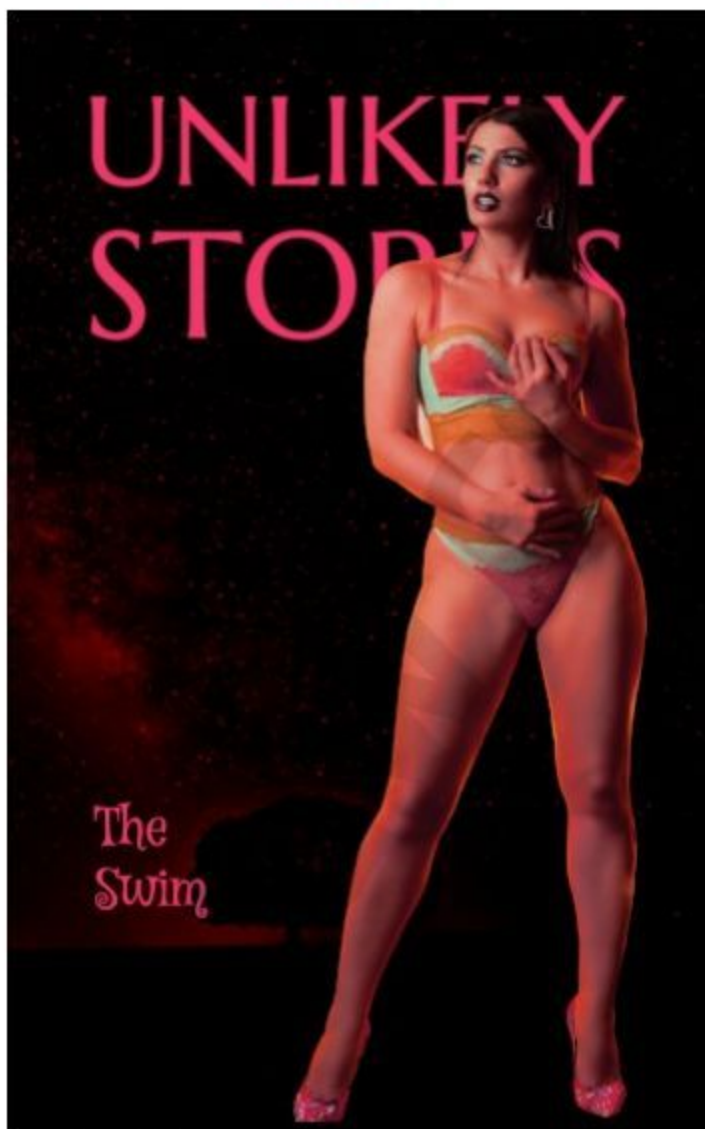
I was all set to have a nap myself when I sensed that I was being observed by somebody. I looked around and Vampira had materialized near me.

"Hi! Can I join you?"

"Sure," I said pointing to the empty lounge chairs.



The Swim



Vampira spent some time in the waters. She is thin. In my book, that's healthy. After her swim, Vampira went to the cottage for a shower. I took this opportunity to meet my friend's wife without Vampira being around.

"Your friend..."

"Do you like her?"

"I like all women."

"It's the women who don't like him."

"You want me to elaborate on the love-letter situation?" I asked her idiotic husband. I turned back to her. "How come you are married and she is still single?"

"I got married immediately after I finished my exams. From the day I turned 18, my parents were warning that the a girl's youth had a limited shelf life and that I was going to get old like milk. Even before I got my certificate, they had tied this guy to my neck."

"Why did she get the teeth and the tattoos?"

"Her parents indulged her whims and fancies. There was nobody to tell her to stop and think. By the time she came to her senses, her appearance had completely changed. She looked like a vampire. Her parents are loaded so for the last few years they were also paying for getting the tattoos removed. She says she is not going to do anything to her teeth though. She still likes them."

"That's all I want to know."

My friend followed me out.

"So, the werewolf is not your thing, huh?"

"She might be my future missus so be respectful of her."

My friend almost sat down on the hot concrete and started laughing.

"I thought you might be interested in her but I never thought you will be thinking of marrying her."

I didn't say anything.

"So, in future, when we... normal people will be shopping at a grocery store, you will be getting half of your supplies from a pet shop!"

I waved a finger at him.

"If we have leftovers, can we give you a doggie-bag?"

I aimed a punch at him. "Stop it!"

"You know if you startle her or step on her tail, she might bite you with those teeth. Doctor will have to give you several painful shots around the navel."

Now, I punched him in the belly. He gasped for air and fell down. The concrete was hot and he tried to get up but could not. I grabbed his hand and stood him up. He still could not breathe. I slapped his back a few times and he seemed to recover.

When he got better, he said, "You are already frothing at the mouth. Let's go to a doctor and get this checked out. It could be serious."

"I'm going to put YOU in a serious condition."

"Don't get hot under the collar. Let me see if there are any puncture wounds around you neck."

He tried to inspect my neck. I brushed off his hand.

"Let us go to the beach and see if you are hydrophobic. So far, you don't seem to have any problem with the Sun. Let's see how you react to the full moon."

Then, he knelt on the ground, raised his hands like a dog and started howling. Somebody, get this guy a straightjacket. He has totally flipped.

I took out my phone, dialled a number, and said, "Hello, forest department? Water buffalo division, please. We have a wild animal on the loose here. Can you help us?"

"Okay. I will stop."

"Any time."



When we reached the lounge chairs, everyone else was already there. The kids hurrahed and dragged Vampira to us.

"They want to get into the water."

I took off my shirt and gave it to my friend. He went back to the tree where his wife was waiting. I took hold of the boy's hand and Vampira took hold of the girl's hand and we hit the surf. For a while, we were throwing the kids like they were volleyballs. When one of the kids remained under water longer than usual, we decided it was not safe and waded out of the waters.

My friend and his wife had already gone back to the cottage. They had placed a dry towel on each chair. My fruit stash was still there but the kids were depleting it faster than I liked.

"Were you two very close friends in school?"

"Not all the time. We studied in the same school from kindergarten. It was only in 11th when we both chose the pure-science group and got to study in the same section. We became close only after that. In the last year of our graduation, he moved to another part of city. We went our separate ways and did not have much contact until now."

"My friend says you both still fight with each other, like you did when you were in school."

"We are friends and we try to drag each other down however we can."

"My friend says her husband says you are jealous of him."

"He is jealous of me and I'm jealous of him. And, we take great pleasure in each other's failures."

She laughed and said, "It seems unusual."

"It is not real jealousy but we bully each other. Sometimes, our failures come in very handy."

"Really?"

"Maybe not. Looking back, maybe there is real jealousy. You see I'm the really good-looking guy and several girls were giving him love letters. I could not believe it."

Vampira laughed.

"He was really goofy-looking and then there were these reports of girls falling for him. He himself said he had received love letters. I could not believe it. Why someone in their right mind would go and give someone goofy-looking like him a love letter was beyond my understanding."

More laughter. The kids were intently listening but not laughing.

"Do you kids have to sit so close?"

They did not budge.

"Come on, let's go for a walk. I will explain what happened. It is beyond unbelievable."

I told the kids to maintain some distance between them and us.

"For several years, I did not believe it. In the beginning of our working careers, we were temping at a company. One day, two other girls joined us."



Inna Mykytas / V. Subhash

By now, the kids had closed the gap and were walking alongside our shadows. I gestured to

Vampira sit down on the sand. I then asked the kids to kick their balls into the water and catch them when they return. This seemed to be an interesting exercise and the kids left us alone for some time.



My friend has an inferiority complex because he has dark skin. One day, he came to my house very depressed and complained that he had lost an interview because he was black.

"Did they give the job to a girl?"

"No"

"So, a guy got it?"

"Yes."

"Who cares about a guy's colour?"

"This is a sales/marketing position and they always give it to white guys. It is PARTIALITY!"

"They will give the job to whoever they think is going to make the biggest sales for them. Their salaries depend on that. Maybe the guy already has some experience or is better qualified. It is just a coincidence that he was white. You have not even finished graduation. You do not have experience, other than selling fraud financial products. They did not give you the job because you are stupid."

"I don't think so."

"Where were other white guys who were not selected? Did all white candidates get selected? You got rejected because you are stupid."

"So, that might really be the case? I'm stupid?"

"100%! At the start of our careers, we can be stupid. We will get experience over time. Everyone has to start from zero."

"Really?"

"I'm not stupid. Even I make big blunders. Let me give you an example. You remember our English teacher?"

"They guy who used to beat everyone?"

"Yeah. One day, while revising for the exams with one of our friends, I found something really stupid that I had written in my classwork notebook. In the lesson 'To Sir With Love', there was a question, 'Why was Mr. Braithwaite unemployed for 18 months?'"

"Yeah?"

"I wrote, 'Mr. Braithwaite was unemployed because he was a Black for 18 months.'"

My friend started laughing.

"Can you imagine what would have happened if the teacher had spotted it?"

"Oh, no! Stop!"

"He would have pasted the page on the notice board and converted it to a shrine. Everyone morning he would have gone there and done pooja for it."

"This is the funniest thing I have ever heard."

Finally, he got his cheer back. When he got on his cycle and prepared to leave, he loudly recalled, "Because he was a Black for 18 months". He shook his head, "Nobody can be that stupid!"



Vampira has been laughing uncontrollably for some time. The kids came back to see what the commotion was and there was no way they were going to leave us alone now. We walked back to the tree. My friend and his wife had returned.

"Where did you go?"

"Take your kids back. They are bugging us."

They grabbed their kids and went for an early dinner. We remained on the chairs because it was not dark yet.

"This happened when we were interning at a finance company. Two girls joined us for the

Books By V. Subhash

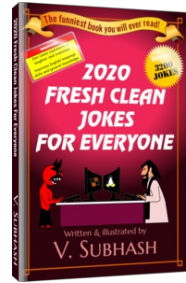
I invite you to visit my site WWW.VSUBHASH.IN, and check out my other books, special discounts, sample PDFs and full ebooks. In 2020, I started publishing books. For two decades before that, I have been publishing feature articles, free ebooks (old editions still available), software (server/desktop/mobile), reviews (books, films, music and travel), funny memes and cartoons. You can follow these adventures on my blog: <http://www.vsubhash.in/blogs/blog/index.html>

My books for children are under the pseudonym Ólafía L. Óla (because it has laugh and LOL).

2020 Fresh Clean Jokes For Everyone

This is one of the biggest jokebooks ever written - over 3200 jokes spread over:

- **Part 1 — For Learning** (computer jokes, programming jokes, physics jokes, chemistry jokes, biology jokes, medical jokes, financial jokes, geography jokes, pun jokes and THREE CHAPTERS DEVOTED TO FOREIGN LANGUAGES)
- **Part 2 — For Fun** (bar jokes, blonde jokes, cross-the-road jokes, knock-knock jokes, lightbulb jokes, knock-knock jokes, romantic (breakup) jokes)
- **Part 3 — Only For Intellectuals** (jokes about philosophy, advertising, news and politics)



It has lots of jokes purely for the hedonist consumption of humour, content to improve vocabulary and general knowledge, thought-provoking poems (mostly as financial/political limericks set to the tune of popular nursery rhymes) AND some of the best one-liners EVER written in English. Absolutely no (ಽ) humour.

• Pages: 292 • Paperback: \$10 • Ebook: An older subset with 420 jokes is available FOR FREE

2020 Fresh Clean Jokes For Kids

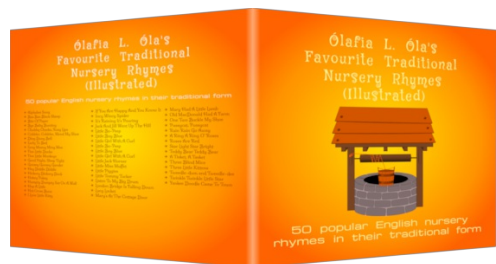
This 'for kids' subset of the 2020 jokebook has over 2200 jokes. It has all of *Part 1 (For Learning)* and some non-political jokes from *Part 2 (For Fun)* & *Part 3 (Only For Intellectuals)*. Joke types include computer jokes, programming jokes, cross-the-road jokes, physics jokes, chemistry jokes, biology jokes, medical jokes, financial jokes, geography jokes, knock-knock jokes, breakup jokes...). Special chapters include *Elephant & Ant Jokes*, *Off-The-Wall Philosophers*, *Useful French Phrases*, *Useful Latin Phrases*, *Other Useful Foreign Phrases*, *Jokes You Love To Hate*, *Jokes In Advertising*, and *Fancy Creature Jokes*. No political or controversial jokes. Absolutely no (ಽ) humour.



• Pages: 166 • Paperback: ₹550 or \$7.70 • Ebook: Will never be published

Ólafía L. Óla's Favourite Traditional Nursery Rhymes (Illustrated)

The political correctness pandemic has caused many nursery rhymes to be rewritten or eliminated altogether. This illustrated children's book has **50 popular English nursery rhymes in their traditional form**. The selected rhymes have stood the test of time and this **large-print paperback with edge-to-edge colour** makes it easy for kids to read them.

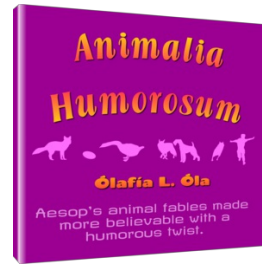


• Pages: 44 (39 with real content) • Colour Paperback: \$9

Animalia Humorosum

This is an illustrated children's storybook based on Aesop's Fables. The stories have been made more believable by changing the ending with a humorous twist. **The book is a large-print paperback with edge-to-edge colour.**

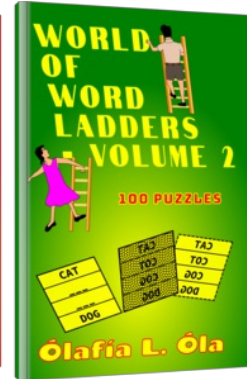
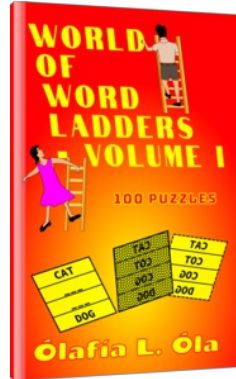
- Pages: 30 (26 with real content)
- Colour Paperback: \$9
- Ebook (for parental review): ₹70 or FREE



World of Word Ladders

Word ladders are a wonderful pastime. These puzzles are neither tough nor easy. They have the right balance between exercising the brain and having fun. Word ladders can challenge a kid's thinking ability, spelling skills and vocabulary. For an adult, word ladders are pure fun. A word ladder has a diagram of a ladder with a word on both the first and last rungs. You need to change only one letter in the blank middle rungs so that the first word is transformed into the last word. Next to each word ladder is its solution. The solution is obscured to protect the challenge. Here are some examples:

- C-A-T » C-O-T » C-O-G » D-O-G
- L-A-S-T » L-O-S-T » L-O-S-E » H-O-S-E » H-O-P-E



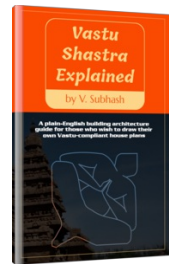
- Puzzles: 100
- Paperback: \$6 (per volume)

Vastu Shastra Explained

Vastu Shastra Explained is a plain-English Vāstu Śāstra building-architecture guide for those who wish to draw their own Vastu-compliant house plans. The book does not upsell Vaastu as a panacea for all ills nor does it portray Vastu as the Indian Feng Shui. Instead, it presents Vastu as a collection of time-tested best-practices in Indian building architecture.

This book is based on the *Vastu Shastra* given in *Matsya Purana*. A PDF containing the original English translation is available for free on my website.

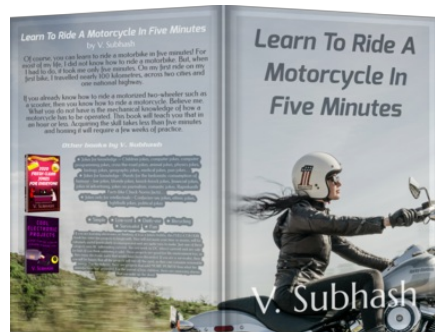
- Pages: 38 (31 with real content)
- Colour Paperback: \$7.77
- Ebook: ₹100, \$6



Learn To Ride A Motorcycle In Five Minutes

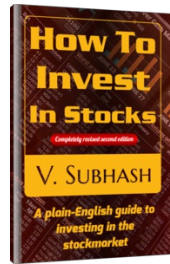
Yes, you can! For most of my life, I did not know how to ride a motorbike. But, when I had to do, it took me only five minutes. On my first ride on my first bike, I travelled nearly 100 kilometres, across two cities and one national highway. Acquiring the skill takes less than five minutes and honing it will require a few weeks.

- Pages: 40 (30 with real content)
- Paperback: \$7.70
- Ebook: ₹100, \$6



How To Invest In Stocks, 2nd Edition

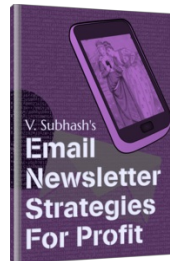
The first edition book was written in 2003 for the Indian stockmarket. It was popular around the world because it was a plain-English guide to investing in the stockmarket. The 2020 completely revised second edition maintains the original premise but has a global focus, updated information and new chapters. **It has some useful 'extra' information that you will not find in any investment book and no business school will teach you.** Mere book knowledge about stockmarkets will not help you understand the markets. Markets are influenced by news and information (there is a difference).



• Pages: 94 • Paperback: \$9.90 • Ebook: ₹100 or FREE

Email Newsletter Strategies For Profit

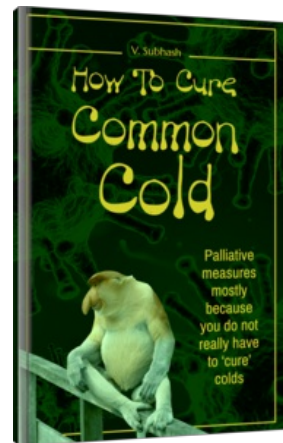
An organically grown mailing list is an invaluable resource for your business. It is your own social network. You need to nurture it like a baby. This book not only explains how to create user-friendly email newsletters but also helps you improve email deliverability, organically grow your mailing list, implement industry-standard best-practices and apply practical troubleshooting tips and tricks.



• Pages: 40 (33 with real content) • Paperback: \$7.70 • Ebook: ₹100

How To Cure Common Cold

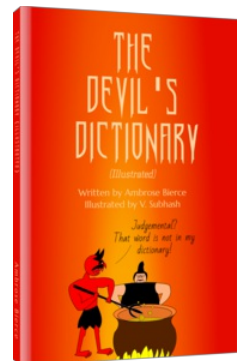
Non-allergic rhinitis or common cold is an ailment that usually resolves on its own. It can be very disruptive and make you feel miserable. **How To Cure Common Cold describes several palliative measures** (not curative options) that can be used to treat the symptoms while the body fights off the infection. Because this is a thin topic, **bonus content** on natural weight-loss techniques, an easy-to-cook vegetarian food recipe, dental care tips, skincare tips, and some family-planning advice are included in this book. **DISCLAIMER:** The author is not a medical professional. Despite seeking medical treatment for common cold, his deviated nasal septum made the episodes very difficult to go through. Over several years, he tried and tested several palliative measures to treat the symptoms. In this book, he describes what measures might work for young healthy individuals like him. These recommendations are not intended for kids, adolescents, convalescents, seniors or in people where the cold symptoms are part of a larger ailment. **This book is not sponsored by any drug firm or commercial entity.**



• Pages: 31 (8 with real content) • Paperback: \$4.99 • Ebook: ₹99 or FREE

The Devil's Dictionary

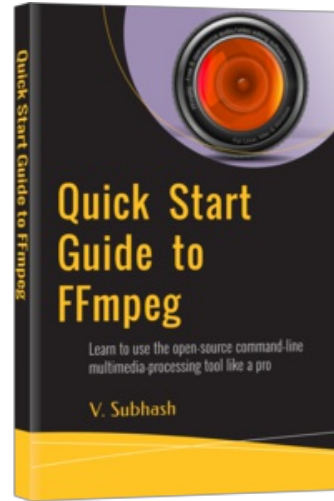
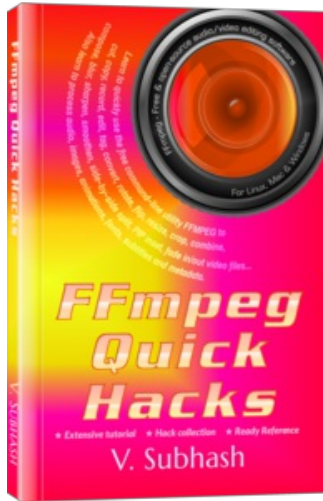
The Devil's Dictionary by Ambrose Bierce from 1911 is a great repository of brutally frank and unusually cynical descriptions for popular words and phrases in English. In my 2020 remake, the original text has been illustrated with contemporary caricatures (of Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, Bill Gates, Don Lemon, Elon Musk, Joe Biden...). It has the **neat easy-on-the-eye look of any new dictionary (modern fonts, two-column pages, starting/ending words on every page)**. If you consider yourself as a woke, liberal, Leftie, Progressive, Socialist, Communist, Feminist... then this book is not for you. This book by Bierce is a product of its time and may not match your unrealistic expectations. Maybe, you could gift it to your (fr)enemies. They might like it.



• Pages: 160 • Paperback: \$9 • Ebook: ₹100

Quick Start Guide to FFmpeg

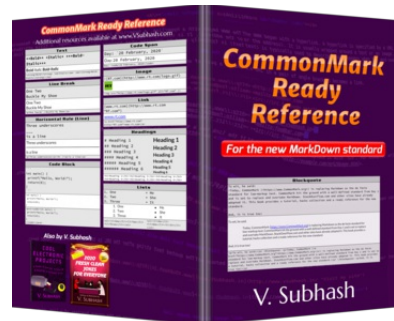
FFmpeg is THE BEST software to easily create, edit, enhance and convert audio and video files. It is a FREE and open-source command-utility available for **Linux, Mac and Windows**. And, **Quick Start Guide to FFmpeg** is THE BEST book for an extensive FFmpeg tutorial, hack collection and quick reference. It is richly illustrated with color screenshots, code examples and tables to help you work with audio, video, images, animations, fonts, subtitles and metadata like a PRO. NOTE: In 2023, the old self-published book *FFmpeg Quick Hacks* was withdrawn.



• Pages: 280 • Colour Paperback: \$44.99 • PDF Ebook: \$29.99 (from Apress/SpringerNature)

CommonMark Ready Reference

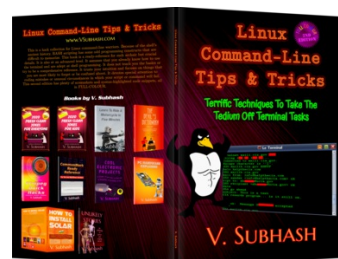
Markdown is an easy human-readable text format that can serve as the common base for exporting to multiple document formats such as HTML, ODF, DOC/DOCX, PDF and ebook (EPUB, MOBI...). It is a great tool for authors, technical writers and content developers to create books, manuals, web pages and other rich-text content. CommonMark is a new well-formed standard for the old Markdown spec. **CommonMark was one of the reasons I was able to write and design 21 books in one year.** Incidentally, this is the first-ever book on CommonMark. You will be buying a piece of history! The paperback's covers are designed like a quick reference card.



• Pages: 56 (39 with real content, 6 with bonus content) • Paperback: \$7 • Ebook: ₹100 or FREE

Linux Command-Line Tips & Tricks

This is a tips-and-tricks collection for Linux command-line warriors. It is also at an advanced level. It assumes that you already know how to use the terminal and are adept at shell programming. It does not teach you the basics or try to be a comprehensive reference. It trusts your intuition and focuses on things you are most likely to forget. Because of its ancient history, BASH scripting has some odd programming constructs that are difficult to memorize. This book tries to provide a ready-reference for such archaic but crucial details. It pays special attention to coding mistakes or unusual circumstances in which your script or command will fail. The paperback has screenshots and syntax-highlighted code examples, all in full-colour.



• Pages: 100 • Colour Paperback: \$9.99 • Ebook: ₹100 or FREE

PC Hardware Explained

You can build a PC in 30 minutes with just a screwdriver. Knowing which computer components will work together is not so easy. This full-colour paperback will explain computer hardware using **simple terms, illustrations, photographs and tables**. Before **buying a new laptop from the store** or **assembling a new desktop from parts**, get this book. You will be able to read the technical specifications of a PC and understand what it can and cannot do. The mumbo-jumbo accompanying the sales pitch of a new computer will not be so alien.

• Pages: 30 (22 with real content) • Colour paperback: \$7 • Ebook: ₹100



Cool Electronic Projects

If you are learning electronics or thinking of it as a future hobby, this FULL-COLOUR book has some fun projects to begin with. They will not waste your time or money, will be extremely useful (particularly in emergencies) and are quite easy to make. Just one of these projects uses AC (alternating current). The rest work on DC (direct current) and are safe for kids (if you think soldering is safe). These projects are good for the environment too, as they reuse electronic parts that would have been discarded. If you are a survivalist, then you will be happy that all the projects will run off-the-grid, as they can consume renewable energy. For the tinkerer, there are projects that add MORE POWER than what the manufacturer had provided. For the parent of lazy children, there are annoying alarms that can wake up the dead.

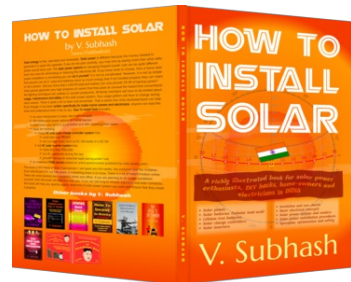
• Pages: 40 (33 with real content) • Paperback: \$9.90 • Ebook: ₹100



How To Install Solar

This is a heavily illustrated guidebook for **INDIAN** solar power enthusiasts, DIY hacks, home-owners and electricians about solar panels, batteries, inverters, charge controllers, installation procedures and costs. It starts with a simple introduction to home electrical systems, proceeds on to describe various aspects of solar power and options available for home owners, and then provides step-by-step instructions for installing a low-cost DC-only solar charge controller system for ₹6000 and a solar inverter system providing AC power backup for ₹30,000. Also included is an extensive FAQs section based on questions and reviews published by solar power users online.

• Pages: 76 • Colour paperback: \$7.70 • Ebook: ₹100

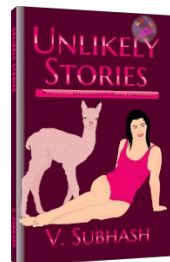


Unlikely Stories

This is an anthology of horror and comedy stories — an exorcism, an alien encounter, a haunted lift, a seance, a shapeshifter, a werewolf, a talking bird, an evil twin, an alien invasion and a distressed young alpaca — all weaved into a witty love yarn. The author originally intended to write a non-fiction book based on real-life incidents. He was however **forced by several governments** to name this book as '*Unlikely Stories*' and release it only as a fiction title. The stories have turned out to be **supernatural/paranormal/sci-fi fantasies with ample doses of action, horror and humour**. The entire book is in first person and everything happens very fast. There is never a dull moment.

First edition stories

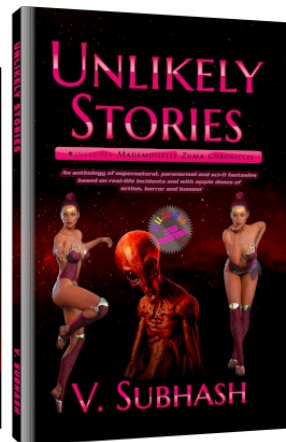
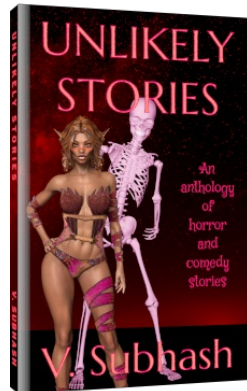
- **The trip:** The lead is invited by his friend to a resort where he meets the first heroine *Vampira*.



- **The swim:** The lead decides that Vampira is his soul mate he has been waiting all his life. He tells several stories to entertain his friend's kids and also impress Vampira.
- **The exorcist:** The second lead is an Indian crook who escapes to the West to start a new life. He attempts to go legit but finds competition from a professional medium operating under the trade name of *Mademoiselle Zuma*. She is dangerous because she is a mind-reader.
- **Alien encounter:** After the successful exorcism, this lead is asked to help a teenager who has been repeatedly 'abducted' by an alien.
- **The lift:** A recently deceased security guard haunts a lift where he had died and seeks revenge.
- **Femme fatale:** The second lead has a showdown with a female animal spirit.
- **The seance:** A young woman in the city is troubled by nightmares involving a hooded skeleton. A newly married nurse blanks out every night. She is also troubled by bizarre nightmares. *Mademoiselle Zuma* solves both cases.
- **The haunting:** An old mansion is haunted by a presence. Every new buyer and his family gets driven to such desperation that they eventually sell. The second lead investigates and almost gets killed.
- **Family planning:** The first lead and Vampira plan their life together. In the first ending, they get married. In the second ending (written by the lead after their first night), **Stone Age Man (SAM)** and **Stone Age Woman (SAW)** discover the mystery of life. (This is an over-the-top parody of the controversy about **MEN WRITING WOMEN**.) Other than some intimate events implied in comic fashion, there is no physical contact between the sexes in the entire book. Not even a kiss. The book is clean throughout. No swear words. No corny mushy dialogue. No degeneracy. No weirdness. Just no low-hanging fruit.

Second edition stories (*Mademoiselle Zuma Chronicles*)

- **Shadows in the night:** A young woman is troubled by a ghostly intruder at night.
- **Zuma vs. Cutie:** Zuma finds competition from an unlikely friend.
- **The evil twin:** A rich heiress is driven to desperation by a deceased twin who wants her to die as well.
- **The alien invasion:** A bolide crashes down in the Atlantic. The site becomes an alien platform for launching attacks on English-speaking countries. No other countries are attacked. The world's sole super power collapses after a few days. The strangest thing about the invasion is that the aliens' primary objective is not humans but cows. This is no run-of-the-mill alien invasion story. Uniquely, it provides an fascinating economic model for staging a successful alien invasion.
- **Please do not smile at our alpaca:** Zuma and her husband restart a farm devastated by the aliens. Things go well until her husband picks a fight with a South American.



NOTE: This second edition is a FULL-COLOUR illustrated book with several new stories written from the perspective of Zuma.

- 1st edition paperback (140 small grayscale-illustrated pages): \$9
- 2nd edition paperback (122 bigger colour-illustrated pages): \$16
- 1st edition ebook: ₹100
- 2nd edition ebook: ₹200

Unlikely Stories

www.VSubhash.com

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Other books by V. Subhash



Shelve in:
FICTION » SHORT STORIES
FICTION » HUMOROUS
FICTION » FANTASY » PARANORMAL
FICTION » SCIENCE FICTION