



## Are You Here For What I'm Here For?

*Brian Booker*

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**Are You Here For What I'm Here For?** Brian Booker

“A brilliant debut.” —**CHARLES BAXTER**, author of *The Soul Thief* and *There's Something I Want You to Do*

The suspense creeps in and takes hold in seven stories about troubled characters grappling with rare illnesses, menacing chance encounters, sexual awakening, impending natural disasters, and New Age cults.

Within these pages, the everyday meets the uncanny as two high school friends go out for one unforgettable night. A boy, haunted by dreams of a catastrophic flood, becomes swept up in an encephalitis epidemic. A hypochondriac awaits her diagnosis at a Caribbean health resort. A disease researcher meets his nemesis on a train. A father searches for his missing son in a remote mountain lodge where nothing is quite as it seems. An elderly pharmacist protects his adopted nephew, who found a mermaid in a bottle, from a coastal village gripped by hysteria. A teenager is sent to a “therapeutic” boarding school with disturbing methods and is reunited with a staff member years later.

Even at its most surreal, this polished and lyrical debut remains grounded in the emotional lives of people teetering atop widening chasms of confusion and doubt.

**Brian Booker's** stories have been published in the *New England Review*, *Conjunctions*, *One Story*, *Tin House*, *Vice*, and elsewhere. He holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and a PhD in English from New York University, and has been a fiction fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and at the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing. He teaches creative writing at the University of Chicago. *Are You Here For What I'm Here For?* is his first collection of fiction.

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