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Stranger Things Happen: Stories



Synopsis

“An alchemical mix of Borges, Raymond Chandler and Buffy the Vampire Slayer.” •Salon.com (Best of the Year) “A delightful collection.” •Cleveland Plain Dealer “My favorite fantasy writer.” •Alan Cheuse, All Things Considered “Link’s stories defy explanation, or at least, brief summary, instead working on the plane between dream and cognitive dissonance. They are true to themselves: witty, beautiful, funny, and startling.” •Rain Taxi “Link uses the nonsensical to illuminate truth, blurring the distinctions between the mundane and the fantastic to tease out the underlying meanings of modern life.” •Booklist “The 11 fantasies in this first collection from rising star Link are so quirky and exuberantly imagined that one is easily distracted from their surprisingly serious underpinnings of private pain and emotional estrangement.” •Publishers Weekly “Kelly Link’s collection of stories, Stranger Things Happen, really scores.” •Daniel Mendelsohn, New York Magazine “A tremendously appealing book, and lovers of short fiction should fall over themselves getting out the door to find a copy.” •Washington Post Book World “Stylistic pyrotechnics light up a bizarre but emotionally truthful landscape. Link’s a writer to watch.” •Kirkus Reviews “A set of stories that are by turns dazzling, funny, scary, and sexy, but only when they’re not all of these at once. Kelly Link has strangeness, charm and spin to spare. Writers better than this don’t happen.” •Karen Joy Fowler “Kelly Link is probably the best short story writer currently out there, in any genre or none. She puts one word after another and makes real magic with them-funny, moving, tender, brave and dangerous. She is unique, and should be declared a national treasure, and possibly surrounded at all times by a cordon of armed marines.” •Neil Gaiman “Kelly Link is the exact best and strangest and funniest short story writer on earth that you have never heard of at the exact moment you are reading these words and making them slightly inexact. Now pay for the book.” •Jonathan Lethem “The eleven stories in Kelly Link’s debut collection are funny, spooky, and smart. They all have happy endings. They were all especially written for you. A Best of the Year pick from Salon.com, Locus, The Village Voice, and San Francisco Chronicle. Includes Nebula, World Fantasy, and Tiptree award-winning stories. Kelly Link is the author of three collections of short fiction Stranger Things Happen, Magic for Beginners, and Pretty Monsters. Her short stories have won three Nebula, a Hugo, and a World Fantasy Award. She was born in Miami, Florida, and once won a free trip around the world by answering the question “Why do you want to go through the world?” (Because you can’t go through it.) Link lives in Northampton, Massachusetts, where she and her husband, Gavin J. Grant,

run Small Beer Press, co-edit the fantasy half of The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror, and play ping-pong. In 1996 they started the occasional zine Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet.

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Customer Reviews

The 11 fantasies in this first collection from rising star Link are so quirky and exuberantly imagined that one is easily distracted from their surprisingly serious underpinnings of private pain and emotional estrangement. In "Water Off a Black Dog's Back," a naive young man who has never known personal loss finds that the only way he can curry favor with his lover's physically afflicted family is to suffer a bizarre amputation. The protagonist in "Travels with the Snow Queen" reconsiders her fairy-tale romance when she deconstructs the clichés of traditional fairy tales and realizes that their heroines inevitably sacrifice and suffer much more than their heroes do. Link favors impersonal and potentially off-putting postmodern narrative approaches, but draws readers to the emotional core of her stories through vulnerable but brave characters who cope gamely with all the strangeness the world can throw their way. In the book's most effective tale, "Vanishing Act," a young girl's efforts to magically reunite herself with her distant family by withdrawing from the world around her poignantly calls attention to the spiritual vacancies and absence of affection in the family she stays with. "The Specialist's Hat" features twin sisters whose morbid obsessions seems due as much to their father's parental neglect as their mother's death. Although a few of the selections seem little more than awkward freshman exercises in the absurd, the best shed a warm, weird light on their worlds, illuminating fresh perspectives and fantastic possibilities. Copyright 2001 Cahners

Link offers strange and tantalizing stories--contemporary fiction with a fairy-tale ambience--that explore the relationship between loss and death and the many ways we try to cope with both. She boldly weaves myth and fairy tale into contemporary life, drawing inspiration from the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, from the fairy tale of Cinderella, from the writings of C. S. Lewis, and from the true story of the Donner party's descent into cannibalism. Meet Humphrey, one of Zeus' many illegitimate sons, and June, his girlfriend, who decides to travel to Hades to bring Humphrey back. Learn the rules of being dead, and find out what really happened between Kay and the Snow Queen. Ask yourself what would have happened to the prince if he had never found the girl whose foot fit the glass slipper. Link uses the nonsensical to illuminate truth, blurring the distinctions between the mundane and the fantastic to tease out the underlying meanings of modern life. Bonnie JohnstonCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Kelly Link is among the best American writers of her cohort. Her work beautifully illustrates the oblique angle genre writers bring to the usual Big Subjects -- love, death, envy, sex, entropy. (Sorry; the last word is there for euphony.) This doesn't include my favorite of her stories, which I think is called something like "Stone Animals," but all the stories are taut, intriguing, and satisfying in their own ways. And who could resist a writer who names one of her heroines "Bunnitine"? Read her, read her, read her! (And not just this book, all of her.)

The early stories in this collection are definitely among the best I've read from Link, "The Specialist's Hat" probably her very best. But Link also seems to create a quickly spiraling time effect with her Donald-Barthelme-meets-Amy-Hempel style. She has a good ear for rhythm and sentence juxtaposition, but some of stories quickly fizzle and left me checking the number of pages left--and when that number was more than ten, I just wanted to flip forward to the next story rather than bear through.

The best thing about Kelly Link's writing style is what she doesn't tell you. Link has mastered a ephemeral style where she hints and alludes to much more sinister and interesting aspects of her characters and stories. She doesn't hand the reader anything, instead the reader must decode the story and find the characters' motivations, and the more fantastical aspects of her stories truly lend to this style. All the age old tropes and symbols are there, but Link gives more weight to these tried

and true devices with well thought structure and allusion. A truly wonderful read.

A book as new and fresh as listening to Laurie Anderson's Big Science for the first time. All her books are equally amazing. We can only hope she writes another soon

"Stranger Things Happen" is a brilliant dark fantasy anthology. There's so much derivative, hack writing in dark fiction that one is surprised to encounter an author who can create vivid, macabre worlds and convincingly populate these worlds with emotionally damaged men and women. This is not good writing: this is great writing. Kelly Link's stories are top tier-- fantastical, dark, dangerous and, at the end, sad. Ms. Link's vivid, tactile and visual writing illuminates the terror, pathos and frustrated longing inherent in being human. Ms. Link creates convincing emotionally damaged characters and plops them into dark, sensual, diabolically dangerous worlds. This is very, very powerful stuff by a fabulist at the top of her game. Quite frankly, I'm in awe. Thank-you, Ms. Link.

Haven't got too into the book

Original. Rivetting. Emotive. Like a pocket universe, each story will immerse you in another extraordinary and fantastical world. You won't want it to end!

Haven't read much. Got good review. Language is kind of boring, to me.

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