

Compression Scars

Kellie Wells

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The eleven stories in Kellie Wells's debut collection cover a wide range of eccentric characters—from a young girl experiencing her friend's strange demise to a set of opposite-sex conjoined twins. Forced to deal with the debilitating confines of the physical world—usually manifest in some kind of deformity or affliction, from compression scars to mysterious blue skin—Wells's characters struggle to transcend their existential disappointments and find some way and someone to love.

In the title story, Ivy and her best friend Duncan struggle to understand their mortality as Ivy learns of his potentially fatal internal scarring caused by a moped accident. As Ivy says, "Things can get so strange so fast," and they frequently do in Wells's stories. But Ivy and Duncan help each other escape their frightening, difficult world, if only momentarily, through imagination, good humor, and closeness.

"Godlight" addresses most specifically the questions that are evident in all the stories: Do you believe in God, and do you believe in reincarnation? Jonas, the Hyatt Regency Hotel's live-in light bulb replacement man, encounters two different characters—a child who lives in the hotel and a woman who claims that her identity has been altered for the Witness Protection Program—who ponder these questions. Meanwhile, Jonas is left wondering what has really become of his missing daughter, Emma.

The physical world is brought into question frequently in this collection, and in "My Guardian, Claire," we see what can happen when someone tries to transcend it—and succeeds. During a séance to reach the narrator's late mother, Claire reaches the spirit world and never truly returns. The narrator tries desperately to retrieve Claire through a hilarious trip to the Exotic Animal Drive-Thru Paradise.

Compression Scars is an eloquent and original collection that vibrantly captures the oddities of both the everyday and the out-of-this-world.



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