

Destiny Comes with Strings Attached

Kim Ekemar

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Destiny Comes with Strings Attached collects twelve intriguing short stories on human beings trapped by destiny.

Kim Ekemar's short story collection, *Destiny Comes with Strings Attached*, is an original meditation on fate, with the author using twelve very different short stories to probe the philosophical ramifications of destiny—whether we believe we create our own or believe it will be inflicted upon us.

While the theme is consistent through every tale, the individual stories vary greatly in subject, and the stories also hopscotch across time and place. For example, "The Hawk and the Bull" explores undercover machinations in an advertising agency its employees call "alphabet soup," a wry reference to such entities being identified by initials. Then in "Bargaining Chips," two very different men undertake to trade their wives, the twist being that one lives in rigid, Catholic, conservative pre-Franco Spain while the other lives on the primitive isle of Papua.

In one of the more enticing stories, "Grapes of Greed," a retired self-absorbed Swiss man buys a small French vineyard. That Swiss retiree, Johann Bordereau, proves to be a memorable character, one strong enough to carry a novel. Another character that sticks in memory is Ole Oleson. His story unfolds in a fashion reminiscent of Thurber's Walter Mitty. Otherwise in the collection, it is the essence of the story rather than characters that dominates attention.

Some of the stories are surreal. Some are straightforward. Some happen long ago. Some arc toward the postmodern approach, especially in conclusion. Given the overall theme, however—meditations on destiny as inevitable, unexpected, and beyond control—the occasional lack of a neat ending doesn't diminish reading pleasure.

There is often an admirable turn of phrase: "I had seen it all before. It was not déjà-vu—it was déjà-vun-hundred." Also, given that the stories cover a wide range of subjects, times, and places, any subconscious and inherent similarities in the writer's voice isn't especially evident. That's well done, considering stories from different places in different time periods risk flatness of voice. The variety of settings and time periods makes the collection appealing. In fact, some of the twelve stories are distinctive because of nicely accomplished settings.

In an almost philosophical undertaking sure to appeal to those who appreciate literary fiction, Ekemar's *Destiny Comes with Strings Attached* intriguingly collects twelve short stories on human beings trapped by destiny.

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