

Extremities

Kathe Koja

Four Walls Eight Windows (October 1998)

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Extremities is the latest effort from Bram Stoker and Locus award-winner Kathe Koja. A collection of 17 stories, *Extremities* is a baffling, exceedingly dark collection of narratives.

Aptly titled, the tales within are extremes extending from a similar point: the darkness at the edge of human nature. A few stories develop enough to allow a sense of wholeness, while most are like utterances or forming nebulas in a dark foreboding universe.

“Waking the Prince” is among Koja’s best efforts and draws a parallel between a dying unconscious prince in a displayed casket and the “perfect” boyfriend to adorn a young lady’s arm. “Reckoning” weaves a tale about the reckoning a young man faces at the hands of his dead lover. “Teratisms” places the reader firmly within the physiological landscape of a dysfunctional family, or the remnants thereof, in a powerful narrative that culminates in an equally powerful climax. “Teratisms” and “Waking the Prince” are the most tightly knit in this collection.

Details and impressions blur in Koja’s *Extremities*, and the impression given is somewhat incoherent. The continual sexual forays are the driving force of this collection and explore the darker elements of sexual behavior. The purpose is obscured by twisting, gyrating plots that are often unresolved. Koja has a unique talent for focusing on senses, and on characters whose rational thought has been sacrificed.

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