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Foreword Review SHORT STORIES

If I Had the Wings

Helen Klonaris
Peepal Tree Press (Aug 1, 2017)
Softcover $17.95 (160pp)
978-1-84523-346-4

Klonaris uses memory and dialogue as valuable tools to convey her stories, introducing a compelling voice to short fiction.

The characters in Helen Klonaris's *If I Had Wings* grow up in the Greek-Bahamian neighborhoods of the Bahamas, a background they share with the author. Several of them, also like the author, are LGBTQ in a fairly conservative culture and struggle with their identities. These eight stories touch on that demographic blend in interesting ways, while also speaking to universal truths.

Memory and dialogue are valuable tools within the stories, many of which are written from the point of view of a child, perhaps most effectively "Cowboy." The title refers to Mr. Lebreton, whom the narrator's father hires for yard and garden work, and whose unspoken backstory the narrator finds fascinating. Soon he also becomes an object of interest for tourists who want to take photos of the would-be cowboy in action scenes they set up. These sessions are exploitative and trouble the narrator, triggering other uncomfortable outcomes.

More disturbing is the title story, about a young girl who is the last of her sisters still living with her father. She tells herself an eerie story about a bull chasing a little girl, searches for an invisible dog her father has locked away, and uses these thoughts to obscure the unsettling reality of why her sisters have left.

The most ambitious story is the finale, "The Dreamers," in which a young boy does in fact have wings—feathered wings that he grows unexpectedly. The story is told from a variety of perspectives, including those of the afflicted boy, his mother, his supportive sister, his lover, and the collective crowd of people drawn to find out more about the unusual wings. Each character's self-defined motivations, as well as how others see them, are probed.

If I Had the Wings introduces a compelling voice to short fiction.

JEFF FLEISCHER (Debut Fiction 2017)

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