



Mrs. Death Misses Death

Salena Godden

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A young person invites Death to share her wisdom in Salena Godden's ethereal novel *Mrs. Death Misses Death*.

Wolf is a writer trying to write about what they have known since they were nine: Death. Indeed, after impulse buying an antique desk, Wolf begins to see and hear Mrs. Death, a Black woman who tells Wolf about her past and present. Alternating between long walks around London and writing at the desk, Wolf records Mrs. Death's stories.

Like many of Wolf's experiences with Mrs. Death, the book exists in a liminal space, as both a novel and an exhortation to embrace life and all of its feelings, good and bad. Mrs. Death is a philosophical woman, and in explaining herself, she also discusses personhood and the necessity of connections. The book takes on several forms in order to do this work, including Mrs. Death's stories, poetry, songs from Mrs. Death and Wolf, letters, and diary entries. In between these is the story of Wolf and their family, and of their trauma and its reverberating effects.

Wolf is not the most reliable narrator. They are haunted by the death of their mother. That death hangs over the entire novel; it makes Wolf susceptible to long stretches of severe depression. Wolf's quiet meandering around London, which is alive with ghosts, reflects their fragile mental state.

Everything is connected, and the book charts deliberate paths for Mrs. Death and Wolf. It is subtle in its revelations, building repetitions of phrases in taut moments of anxiety and panic attacks, leading to the quiet shock of an unveiling. Depression is an insular and singular experience, and the book is masterful at describing that foggy state of being from the inside.

Mrs. Death Misses Death is a unique novel about depression and recovery.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (January / February 2022)

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