



She Is Haunted

Paige Clark

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Grief and reckoning take many forms in Paige Clark's expressive collection *She Is Haunted*.

Haunting is most often a regret that tethers one to a place or people: that is the concept at the core of this collection. Every character is haunted by something with which only she can wrestle—or so she thinks.

The woman at the center of "Elisabeth Kübler-Ross" is haunted by the fear of loss. In a mimicry, in part, of the five stages of grief, she denies the type of relationship that God assumes she has, bargaining with God for her unborn child; she becomes depressed at the loss of her mother, and finally accepts that she may have to continue losing things to God to keep her child. It is a riveting exploration of the absence of control. And the woman featured in "A Woman in Love" is also haunted by that lack of control: her grief over the loss of her marriage and a terminated pregnancy manifests in destructive behavior as she tries to exert control over a situation in which she has none.

Quieter stories observe the intersectionality of being an Asian woman. In one, two women have a small, profound realization about their shared haunting by racism and fetishization. Another looks at generational differences between a mother and a daughter, surveyed quantum-mechanics style, as though one has died and the other lived. Elsewhere, grief is overwhelming, as in "Times I've Wanted to Be You" and "Dead Summer," about the loss of a loved one—of a husband in the former tale, and a mother in the latter. These hauntings are too big to grasp, let alone figure out how to live with, and yet the prose suggests that live with it women do.

Steeped in longing, the stories of *She Is Haunted* celebrate the messy strength of women.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (May / June 2022)

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