



## Small Marvels

### Scott Russell Sanders

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Midwestern magic abounds in Scott Russell Sanders's fairy tale short story collection *Small Marvels*.

In Limestone, Indiana, Gordon Mills is a jack of all trades whose big family lives in a dilapidated house that only remains standing because it doesn't know which way to fall. His wife, Mabel, keeps the family together. With their respective parents, Gordon and Mabel work to make ends meet. Even though money is short, there is always food on the table and plenty of love to go around. But while, on the surface, the family's hometown seems to be an ordinary place, and the Mills to be an ordinary family, these linked stories reveal that there is more to both than meets the eye.

Written like fairy tales, the stories about the family and their hometown are full of absurd twists. The mundane becomes fantastical, and the fantastical mundane. In "Aurora," magical light glows above the local landfill; only Gordon and his daughter can see it. In "Trees," Gordon's children take on the characteristics of the trees he plants for them in their garden. In "Blues," Gordon suffers from depression that makes his beard turn blue. In "Sisters," the corn stalks in the family vegetable plot grow to reach the sky, while the beans yield an endless harvest.

In "Centaur," the limestone caves beneath the town are populated with unicorns, griffins, dragons, centaurs, and a solitary phoenix. In "Flood," the family is caught in a heavy downpour that nearly drowns them. This story also sums up the message of all the stories put together: what makes you rich is not money, but love, family, and community.

*Small Marvels* is an evocative short story collection that tickles the imagination as it explores the magic of a Midwestern town.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (May / June 2022)

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