

The Baby Can Sing and Other Stories

Judith Slater

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"The baby can sing. And maybe even dance. If I had a baby, that's the kind of baby I'd want." Slater captures the imagination so subtly and quickly in the title story that the mind dances to the music with the imaginary baby. This music has soul artfully captured in just a few pages, and hidden depths it can take hours to explore.

"The Bride's Lover" invites a look through the camera lens of a rejected lover as he photographs his ex's wedding; "Our New Life" reunites a patient and therapist for startling changes in their lives; "The Glass House," aptly named, tells of a man who values his house more than his wife, his daughter or his lover; "Water Witch" offers a glimpse into the mature mind of a teenager who watches in bemusement as her older sisters and mother chase men; and there are nine more stories just as complex and brilliantly simplistic at the same time.

While the primary appeal for this collection will be for the literary lovers since Slater won the 1998 Mary McCarthy Prize in Short Fiction with it, popular fiction aficionados shouldn't hesitate to browse and be captured within the dance of words even if the announcement of an award automatically makes the reader feel something is wrong with them if they don't like the book. So with trepidation, the first page is cracked and the reader ventures in. In this case, a treasure trove of short fiction awaits. A collection equally at home in an English class and on the bedside table.

MELANIE C. DUNCAN (November / December 1999)

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