

The Inconvenience of the Wings

Silas Dent Zobal

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Dark humor and inventive premises make each of these stories unique, even as they are connected by the theme of loss.

Piercing and unflinchingly honest, *The Inconvenience of the Wings* is a remarkable collection of short fiction by a significant new voice. This is Silas Dent Zobal's first published collection of stories, though his work has appeared in *Glimmer Train*, *Missouri Review*, *Shenandoah*, *North American Review*, and other journals.

Many of these stories are set in the rural Illinois landscape where Zobal grew up, some in Chicago. In brooding, poetic, mythic tales of lost souls facing their limitations and looking for redemption, Zobal's themes bring to mind Cormac McCarthy and Flannery O'Connor.

In one of his most gorgeously constructed stories, "The Hospital," a man struggles to come to terms with the loss of his wife, who lies in a semi-vegetative state following a sudden series of strokes, pregnant with their first child. As the man copes with the confused accusations of her parents, the complications of her medical treatment, and the caring yet remote staff, he reflects on the nature of hospitals and, ultimately, the human condition:

I have one more story to tell. It is the story about the alarm of the heart monitor. It is a story about fear and sadness and loss, but grief is wordless, and it can't be understood until you've lived with it. And once you've lived with it, you live with it forever. It is a story about me startling awake and rising.

Although many of these stories deal with loss, they are also inventive and darkly humorous, never predictable. "Camp of Low Angels" describes an uprising by crafty children at a summer camp. "And We Saw Light" tells of violence against a nameless country girl, in a fragmented, minimalist voice. In the title story, a boy learns to see that his father is "twice as batty" as his friend Rosa's mom; the closing passages about his father's drowning are evocative.

Every story in the collection is powerful, gorgeously written, and true. This is a book to be savored. Reflect on the wise, sad, funny, stunning perceptions, and watch for more stories from this wonderful writer.

KRISTEN RABE (Fall 2015)

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