



The Road to Woop Woop and Other Stories

Eugen Bacon

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The short stories of Eugen Bacon's *The Road to Woop Woop* contort in the audience's imagination because of their original imagery, unique turns of phrase, and refreshing, diverse cast.

In the speculative story "A Maji Maji Chronicle," shapeshifters travel millennia—a reversal of colonization. Atrocities dot their journey of retribution and enlightenment, and a new ruler comes to see absolute power as a taint. In the title entry, a couple on vacation has a tense ride before their car crash; the specter of the boyfriend disappearing limb by limb, even as he continues to drive, makes his girlfriend wonder about her sanity.

Opening with a nanny's bizarre drowning, "A Nursery Rhyme" adds a unique twist to classic tales about unstoppable, evil children; elsewhere, a button, which is presented as a birthday gift, shows life in five-second glimpses and becomes a curse. "Being Marcus" is a beautiful, lyrical, and contemporary reimagining of Greek myths; in it, Brutus experiences a sympathetic, humorous reincarnation as a lonely fitness trainer.

Flash fiction features into the collection, which whittles big ideas down to their essence. Clear, surprising language brings to mind images of eyes that scream and lips as ribbon bows. Gripping descriptions—"One elder bore wrinkles as numerous as the tales of the dead"—are vibrant in detailing otherwise unimaginable worlds. Each challenging story seems to end before its time, leaving ample opportunity for post-reading analysis.

Rife with social commentary, the book includes features of the real world and a population as diverse as the collection itself. Smart, ambitious, and daring, *The Road to Woop Woop* is masterful in combining science fiction with reality, resulting in an unforgettable storytelling experience.

TANISHA RULE (January / February 2021)

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