

The World of Dew and Other Stories

Julian Mortimer Smith

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Otherworldliness informs the eighteen stories of Julian Mortimer Smith's *The World of Dew and Other Stories*, which range from traditional science fiction to speculative fiction, and from flash fiction to long-form short stories, inviting readers into wholly new universes.

Bedrock truths about human fallibility ground the book, in which children believe what their parents tell them, grown-ups play games and become dangerously competitive, and shy people keep to themselves, seeming "full of potential, undamaged somehow." Such human imperfections drive many of the stories, whose suspense is heightened by their alien settings.

As they span worlds and genders, the stories excel at keeping their characters, and their casual conversations, in line with their imagined worlds. In "Barb-the-Bomb and the Yesterday Boy," the boy lives a day behind the rest of his world. "Don't touch him," another character warns, reinforcing his unusual predicament, "or you might end up when he is."

The book's imaginative elements arrive through both mundane details and literal flips of reality, as in "Come-from-Aways," when the narrator remarks, "I could see stars, a whole galaxy of them, spread out below me, underneath the water." Readers must acclimate to new worlds within most of the stories; some of their world building is abrupt, and some distinctions between what's literal and what's figurative are blurred. "That's where I live—that tiny splinter between your fingernails, that fragment, that almost nothing," one narrator says—a metaphor, but one that comes so early in the tale that it could be mistaken for fact.

The uniquely visualized tales of *The World of Dew and Other Stories* place traditional human struggles with mortality, love, and belonging into a panoply of new worlds.

MICHELE SHARPE (March / April 2021)

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