

Trip Wires

Sandra Hunter

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Sandra Hunter's *Trip Wires* is a collection of short stories about the horrors of war, refugee experiences, privilege, and racism. Narrated by children and young adults, each story has themes of profound human connection, love, and unspeakable loss.

"A Nigerian in Paris" is jarring and uncomfortable, focusing both on a refugee's past in his home country and on his present as a recent arrival in France. Detailed memories of his family (his father's arms, his mother's face) wash over him as he navigates his new reality. Reminders of their lives and deaths are constant. As he narrates, the young man's sadness is vivid and palpable. Each familiar ritual or object invites waves of reflection; each foreign experience is a reminder of how out-of-place he is.

Here and elsewhere, metaphorical prose is abundant, achieving a poetic quality while evoking profound emotions and creating lifelike characters. Racism, classism, and injustice are captured in ways that ignite justified feelings of rage.

In "Against the Stranger," an American soldier makes friends, albeit reluctantly, with an adolescent boy during the war in Afghanistan. Finding commonality in their skin color, they quickly form a mutual affection. Memories of the soldier's home life weave in and out of small moments with the young boy, and their differences, which at first seem so apparent, blur. Quick, short sentences move the story along.

Conversational structures stand out in these stories; they are fast, and are set apart with dashes for realistic back-and-forths. Run-on sentences and a lack of punctuation add further emphasis.

Trip Wires is a beautifully written collection, both poetic and melancholic. Deeply moving, and often grim and uncomfortable in their confrontations of unimaginable tragedies, each story evokes a bold, emotional response.

KATIE ASHER (May/June 2018)

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