



Turf

Elizabeth Crane

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Strange things happen in the worlds created by Elizabeth Crane. An unusually tall woman is sleeping on the shelves in a grocery store; “star babies” have taken over the whole United States, except for Puerto Rico; an exclusive group of male geniuses (they don’t know any female geniuses) meets to congratulate themselves on their lofty intellects, ruminate over the loneliness of being the smartest person in the room, and lament the difficulties of never being wrong. There is an unusual preoccupation with the “stuff” of life in these stories, and Crane shows just how much can be learned about people from the things they’ve allowed to accrue around them. Some of her tales are made up of lists, including a particularly poignant, and funny in a sad sort of way, list of all the things that she’s afraid of, including the fear that she’s unqualified to do anything she might get paid for; afraid that when she goes through menopause, she’ll grow a huge lumberjack beard; even afraid that her thoughts are not normal.

In Crane’s worlds, time can get lost in basements, up chimneys, in unused web addresses or lost socks. Even death won’t resolve this problem, because time is different over there. But who knows? Maybe ordering a cake the size of a living room would satisfy, or purchasing enough metal roosters to cover the whole front yard would finally be enough to make you feel safe.

Crane’s imagination is delightful, ebullient, even irritating at times, but in a good way. One thing for sure ... it’s never boring.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July/August 2017)

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