



The Weather in Fritz Bemelmans Park

Holly Tavel

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Fiction. Art. If the past is a foreign country, childhood is a vanished civilization filled with mysterious monuments and charming ruins, and always colored by our own wildly unreliable memories. The 18 stories in this collection offer a kaleidoscopic view of childhood's forgotten tropes and dizzying leaps of logic, and are by turns hilariously paranoid, discombobulated, claustrophobic, and filled with yearning. A parrot regales his new owner with an increasingly outrageous story of his own picaresque past; a woman taking care of her aging mad-scientist father is alarmed by his new teenage sidekick; a dying superhero recalls himself and his archnemesis as lonely grade-school outcasts; coma victims become the unwitting vessels of a shadowy weather-control project; suburbanites, menaced by their material possessions, regress to a prelapsarian state; a trio of bumbling fools in a near-future dystopia try to decide what to do about a giant robot that suddenly appears without explanation.

"I had only had a tiny taste of Holly Tavel's work, and my pulse quickened to learn she at last has a whole book of stories. Tavel's fiction has the delicious feel of children's literature, without being child-like, or for children. Her worlds are magically palpable, rendered in precise detail and a moody palette just beyond reach of reality. They elicit an enormous craving to cross into them and abide there. In 'Ars Poetica,' a woman finds a 'dove-gray mass lightly furred and blurred, as if seen through a pair of smudged glasses' pulsing quietly under the rhododendrons in her garden. This slightly noxious mass is a poem. It won't go away. The story 'Last Words' is in part narrated by a pet macaw, who tells of the destruction of many birds it has known far back in history. Tavel's voice is both comic and elegiac, with a deep sadness underlining the absurdity."

Angela Woodward"

The Weather in Fritz Bemelmans Park Details

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Jeronym says

Ever wondered which colour superheroes dream in? Ever been struck by lightning and lived to tell the tale? Ever tried cutting the wings off a fallen angel otherwise too heavy to lift? Ever experienced the effects of the weather machine at work? Ever spent a couple of days with a seal on an ice floe adrift in the Arctic Ocean?

All of the above (and much more) can be explored & experienced with Holly Tavel's recently published story collection, "The Weather in Fritz Bemelmans Park." Starting at the end, the back-cover description has it that "if the past is a foreign country, childhood is a vanished civilization filled with mysterious monuments and charming ruins, and always colored by our own wildly unreliable memories." The sixteen stories collected here are said to provide "a kaleidoscopic view of childhood's forgotten tropes and dizzying leaps of logic, and are by turns hilariously paranoid, discombobulated, claustrophobic, and filled with yearning."

More generally, Tavel's stories seem to ask: Why is memory always inevitably in the service of preserving mental homeostasis through suppression, displacement, concealment? Last but not least, why do we find past memories always already, as it were, pre-processed and re-programmed by present desire? Of course, Tavel's stories do not & cannot give definite answers to any of these – for good storytelling has far more to do with raising questions than giving answers. But they each ask these questions and think through and around them with sophistication, wit & skill – and together their view is indeed, "kaleidoscopic," however "paranoid, discombobulated, claustrophobic" each may be individually. The whole, as with all great story collections, ultimately larger than the sum of the parts.
