

ABSTRACT

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This 5-story-collection is an absurdist exploration of interpersonal relationships and anxieties from the perspectives of 12-22-year-old female narrators as they fumble through their internalized male gazes, their conceptions of self, and the family, partners, and friends they find themselves surrounded by. Each protagonist (sometimes antagonistic) is named with an “M,” to signify their memoiric nature. These pieces marry grotesque bodily imagery and emotional vulnerability, containing themes of bodily abnormalities and dismemberments—in the form of exchanged arms, skin-suits, and survived beheadings—, nonreciprocal and symbiotic relationships, as well as deep longing and loss. None of the men in these stories are named; instead, they are referred to by titles that signify their relationship to the protagonists, such as “Boyfriend” or “The Pope,” and allude to their universality. The collection tackles questions about how our self-worth gets tied up in the people around us, and what cycles of emotions, grief, and abuse tie us to one another. Possession, intimacy, substance abuse, insecurity, blame, desperation, unsurity, gender dynamics and expectations are explored.