

Good Women

Halle Hill

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Subtle moments of realization reveal the fault lines in otherwise average lives in Halle Hill's emotional, devastating short story collection *Good Women*.

Often centered in the lives of women and girls, this is a collection about awareness and choosing between misery fed by willful ignorance or working toward uncertain change. In "Skin Hunger," a woman hopes that her husband's desire for children will wane. After dealing with microaggressions from him and his family for the duration of their courtship and marriage, the thought of adding biracial children to the situation is untenable to her. In "The Best Years of Your Life," a for-profit university recruiter regrets signing the nondisclosure agreement that keeps her from being honest about the school with prospective students. She cries every day on her commute, and her habit of breaking dishes after work leaves her neighbors concerned.

Whereas the adult heroines of these tales are able to wrestle with the results of their actions or inaction, the book's teenage heroines are left adrift, seeking security in places where none is forthcoming. The girl at the center of "Her Last Time in Dothan" can bear witness to her mother's grief but can do nothing to relieve the ache of her loss. In "Hungry," a girl develops an eating disorder that goes unnoticed during her father's health crisis. Her mother's preoccupation with both her own weight and that of her daughter ensures that even if her illness were noticed, it would be applauded.

An introspective and heartbreaking collection, *Good Women* showcases the interior lives of women who are near their breaking points.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (September / October 2023)

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