



Jellyfish Have No Ears

Adèle Rosenfeld

Jeffrey Zuckerman, Translator

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Adèle Rosenfeld's *Jellyfish Have No Ears* is a poignant novel in which lost hearing reshapes a woman's understanding of the world.

Louise has always been somewhat “uprooted from language” because of her imperfect hearing. Now facing total hearing loss, she learns that she is a candidate for a cochlear implant. But that the process is irreversible, and it will erase and replace what little natural hearing she maintains.

Mourning her potential losses, Louise begins to relish in, and shrink from, the sounds that are unique to her: the timbre of her loved one's voices; misheard words that birth vibrant images and stories. “I liked pronouncing disused words,” she says. “By feeling them on my lips, I [make] a pact with language.” A hearing test word becomes a WWII soldier, and another a panting dog; these phantom companions follow her through the fall and long winter before her decision has to be made.

Louise faces pressure from all sides throughout: from her mother, who hopes that she will take the chance; from an old friend who seems to value her invisible disability more than anything else about her; from new colleagues who resent the accommodations made for her at work; even from her new and loving boyfriend, who finds ways to translate the music she loves to her new range of hearing. At the same time, she tests the bounds of the world as she knows it and tries to record her experiences in terms that others might understand, her explanations veering between synaesthetic and metaphorically acute. She forges her own way, flirting with erasure and transformation, before arriving at a decision that is hers alone to make.

Jellyfish Have No Ears is a profound novel whose heroine's limited hearing flags, forcing her to reconsider how she wishes to interact with others.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (July / August 2024)

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