

★ **Moonflower, Nightshade, All the Hours of the Day: Stories****JD Scott**

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JD Scott's *Moonflower, Nightshade, All the Hours of the Day* is a dazzling collection of stories—part dystopian, part fabulist, and wholly immersive.

In the extraordinary novella “After the End Came the Mall, and the Mall Was Everything,” a shopping mall has enveloped the globe. There are no beaches or forests, only miles and miles of department stores and food courts. Joshua, a teenager working at a tuxedo shop, describes the mall as “our death chamber” and “our salvation,” noting that it “is alive and it's always shifting and changing.” On a lonely night, he follows a giant she-cat—maybe a monster tempting him to his own destruction; maybe a friendly spirit leading him on a quest—into a decaying, abandoned corner and makes a daring rescue. Sharp, compelling language leads to immersion in Joshua's disorienting world of shape-shifters and shadows, which challenges expectations.

The collection's other stories are also engaging and liminal. In “Where Parallel Lines Come to Touch,” an eccentric, isolated teenager living on an island is visited by the spirit of her twin brother, who recently drowned. In “Chinchilla,” a tenuous relationship ends after the death of an ancient creature that represents “everything whole and true and good.” In “Cross,” an athlete who frequents a gym called Pontius Pilates travels to the Garden of Eden, planning his own crucifixion. And in the title story, a florist keeps his boyfriend captive with precise amounts of poison. The premise is dark, but the language is bold:

Every bone needs marrow. He had self-determination before me, but now his body is one that needs me beside it to continue. The roots of banyan trees, too, grow like this.

Like stepping through a looking glass, the stories of *Moonflower, Nightshade, All Hours of the Day* skirt the edges of reality and shimmer with enchanting, otherworldly light.

KRISTEN RABE (May / June 2020)

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