

Stories No One Hopes Are About Them

A. J. Bermudez

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The haunting stories collected in A. J. Bermudez's *Stories No One Hopes Are About Them* comment on qualities of the Anthropocene and center apathy's hand in violence. Volleying between the beauty of final moments and the thrill of crimes, these stories are not to be ignored.

Each story is a reminder that humans are capable of terrible deeds, but that does not mean that humans are terrible. No character in the book is outright lovable; many make questionable decisions. But they are written in a way that allows for reflection. When Marta steals money from her employer and spends it on an extravagant trip in "Obscure Trivia of the Antarctic," a moral gray area is created because said employer treats her poorly. In "The Lady Will Pay for Everything," a mother's apathy on vacation causes destruction in a heartbreaking ending. Other similar dark stories indicate that people can actively choose to change their lives.

Gruesome and gory details—as in "Orphan Type," where it seems that orphaned children are trained in newspaper work, until Ruthie goes missing—may require a pause before proceeding. That said, the message of each story is clear despite creepy moments. Bermudez has compiled stories that both stand on their own and that build on one another, resting between humanity and horror. A young woman touching up her makeup only to sleep with a man who has slept with all of her coworkers in "Octopus," and the suggestion that someone has been murdered in "Cain vs. Cain," are reminders that details can be just as powerful as what remains unsaid. Each story works together to create a narrative about the imperfections of humans, sometimes to the extreme.

Stories No One Hopes Are About Them collects startling tales that beg human beings to care and to take action for what they care about.

ADDISSYN HOUSE (November / December 2022)

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