



Doll Palace

Sara Lippmann

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In this brilliantly rendered debut collection, Sara Lippmann draws the reader into the intimate lives of characters seeking connection beyond their scripted worlds. She captures the beguiling transformation from child to adult with humor, heartache, and desperation. From grieving mothers to fathers adrift, old flames to restless teens, isolated characters in *Doll Palace* are united by conflicting desires and the private struggles of the heart.

A girl ditches her innocence at a state fair. Strippers ponder love over a Brazilian wax. A father falls for a drug-addled babysitter. A mother ends a pregnancy. *Doll Palace* dwells in the harder-edged territories of human compassion, navigating the powerful, often unsettling ground rarely spoken of with awareness, care, and grace. *Doll Palace* is that rare collection that invites imitation but leaves a vast majority wondering how she did it.

"Smart and technically accomplished fiction." **KIRKUS REVIEWS**

"Sara Lippmann's prose is unflinching. Her female characters see motherhood, womanhood and self-hood through a raw and funny lens: I am about to cry, when I laugh. Terribly wonderful and exciting work!"
—Rachel Sherman, author of *Living Room* and *The First Hurt*

"Sara Lippmann is the sort of writer who can drop you with a line. Of a guy wearing a baby in a harness, she writes, 'He yanks on the baby's stubby toes like he is milking it.' I'd read a hell of lot of pages to find a sentence that practically nails an entire generation. Good news is this book has such lines on every page. Lippmann is a fearless writer, and these are concise and deadly stories." —Peter Orner, author of *Last Car Over the Sagamore Bridge*

"Sara Lippmann's *Doll Palace* is a sexy, sad and fearless collection full of humor, pathos and compassion. Her scalpel-sharp stories are raw emotional gems, blinding in their precision. Lippmann understands the pumping highways and byways of the human heart like a seasoned traveler." —Jonathan Papernick, author of *The Book of Stone*

"Sara Lippmann's stories are visceral and gripping, venturing into dark places with sharp wit and a gimlet eye. A lot of them gave me bad dreams, and I mean that in a good way. This is a memorable debut collection." —Alix Ohlin, author of *Inside*

Doll Palace Details

Date : Published September 13th 2014 by Dock Street Press (first published September 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9780991065714

Author : Sara Lippmann

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From Reader Review Doll Palace for online ebook

Martin Ott says

Doll Palace balances carefully between the past and present with stories that straddle what's important in life. Read this. Sara Lippmann is a writer to watch.

Christopher Allen says

Watch for my review at Necessary Fiction in September. Until then, wow, just wow. Can't wait for you to read this.

andrew y says

can you remember the last time you couldn't stop reading a book until you had finished it?
i couldn't until today

Alice Kaltman says

I absolutely LOVED this story collection. Lippmann is a master at mining the deepest reaches of human nature with a deft economy of words. Each story has its own quirks, filled with flawed and believable characters, settings you would never have imagined. The title story, for one. I gobbled each one of these miniature worlds, felt queasy after some, but in a really delicious way. I can't wait to read more from this brilliant writer.

Leesa says

EXCERPT FROM MY FULL REVIEW COMING LATER THIS SUMMER FROM SUNDOG LIT: "Doll Palace (Dock Street Press, September 2014) by Sara Lippmann is a simple book, a simple collection of stories. There are no quotation marks and the feelings are equally bare. Lippmann is one of those authors who can get away with both seriousness and hilarity in the same sentence. The stories are sad and funny, heavy with lightness, stark with ferocious, bubbling paddling under the surface."

Pat Pujolas says

I first heard this author read at a bar in Boston two years ago. And I remember thinking at the time, how could someone so young and petite, be so fierce, so polished, and so profound? Now after reading her first collection, I will add: and with such consistency. This author will rivet you in the details, then shatter your

heart with a sentence (in the best possible way). For criticism: I felt some stories were stronger than others, and I wish the editor had recommended killing a few more darlings. But to me, that's what independent publishing is all about--finding diamonds in the rough. And Sara Lippmann might be the brightest, sparkliest diamond we have. Highest recommend.

Emily Bertholf says

These twenty-three quirky, sardonic tales chock full of carnivals, confectioneries, clowns, dancers, break-ups, and home purchases gone wrong prove no matter what stage of life these characters find themselves in, they're never too old for growing pains and that old, familiar itch of loneliness. Sometimes unsettling, always amusing, the pages of this book nearly turned themselves.

Sara says

big fat bias alert: i wrote it.

Wendy Ortiz says

I'd give this 6 out of 5 stars. So much to love & enjoy here.

Joe Kapitan says

I'm no stranger to Sara Lippmann's writing, having read a few of her stories around the internet (several included in this book), but I wondered if she could maintain such high quality across an entire story collection. Probably shouldn't have wondered.

Many of the stories here focus on women, of different ages, struggling with their circumstances. The insights into the female psyche are abundant, deep and entertaining. And I must say that Dock Street Press makes a beautiful book.

4 stars = go getcha a copy.

Quentin Paquette says

"What's past is prelude," we've all heard, but might not agree as to what is meant. The leads in all these stories are spun by the stress that finds the key already in the lock, turns, opens them up. What is released, though delivered of the past, bares its teeth as surprise and takes them aback. Each of them is challenged to reconsider what they think about who they were, who they are, and who they may become. It is the shock of the familiar that they struggle with, the disorientation that comes with seeing the world with new eyes. We've all stared at the mirror with surprise and remembrance, and these characters do it without looking away. Some of what's past led always to here, and here is where we leave some of it behind forever, but which is which, and, can we choose?

Meg Tuite says

Lippmann is a rare phenomenon. Her short story collection, *Doll Palace* (Dock Street Press), is 23 stories that deliver a masterful, lethal microcosm/macrocosm of inhabiting these awkward bodies we grapple around in. Sibling and parental protection/embarrassment, the strange shelter and regrets of sex, marriage, kids, abortion, and ceaseless encounters that perpetually cling to the amalgam of memories. We sculpt our isolated realities through societal cavities forced or throw upon us.

To call this a debut collection is to do Lippmann a disservice. This is the work of a kinetic, powerful writer who has been haunting us since we first started reading unforgettable words that led us back to the muddy melodies and moonlit bends of our own histories. To read ourselves on the page is the work of an outsider, a listener, a habitual watcher of the ‘unsaid’ beneath the nostalgia and construction of the necessary facades we put up to survive.

The beauty of love and sex:

“There were no washboard comments or termite tits.”

“We were wasted yet he checked me like a holiday turkey.”

“When Mark Pith kissed me in junior high I didn’t brush my teeth for a week even though we’d been shut in a closet at random and his jaw hung loose from wine coolers as if it’d been shot up with Novocain.”

Survival:

“Hardcover releases beckoned grand baggy arms while indie paperbacks huddled on side tables like the homeless around a burning can.”

“She was always feeling ‘vaguely suicidal.’ Name a woman who feels different.”

Marriage, children, secrets, old boyfriends who resurface:

“Hard to believe, at first, but true: marriage lent new depth to solitude.”

“He glances at Steffi but sees only her mouth, a tunnel, dark pink like the ventricle to the model heart at the Franklin Institute they once hid inside on a school trip, her tumbler tilting toward it.”

“His voice low, his body looming over mine like I’m a bug he could squash, the heat rising off of him, ready, like some boomerang pheromone shot into the air because the universe is like that.”

These quotes are glimpses caught by flashlights in the loose spheres of the many lives within ‘a lifetime’. Oh, the glory of black-outs. Clorox won’t even exhume these muted tappings against the synapses of places we don’t want to go when we walk away from dust-riden, cobwebbed sex and blurry fields of ‘I don’t remember that’. Yet when Lippmann takes us there we rediscover the theater of our lives and don’t need to overshadow the sundial of a planetary girdle of suppression with kids and generic yearbook photos.

We are the high notes of back-up singers. We are the instruments: the whole goddamn orchestra. We are something, somewhere in time and the spotlight is parading over those places we might never have returned to alone. Lippmann is not only with us, but gives us the gift of getting back inside the awkward body sex marriage motley being of ourselves; the truth and hilarity of what it is to be human.

Doll Palace is woven so skillfully that the movements from one room to the next, one character’s inner dialogue to the next is fluid and non-linear like memory.

“The Best of Us,” starts out with the narrator at a spa called: Yogaversal. Her suite is a “long cold dorm with large windows and narrow beds for nine others, but it reminds me of the convent where I stayed in Murano during a backpack through Europe junior year. The only difference is this spruced up army cot costs 350\$ a night, happy 40th fucking birthday to me.”

“The day we found out there was nothing wrong with me I cheated on Neil. On the drive back from University of Pittsburgh Medical Center the car smelled of latex and hand sanitizer as it couldn’t make up its mind between a hospital and a whorehouse.”

“When Neil approached with the resort pamphlet—Revolutionize your life! Experience your Ohm away from Home! Ignite your inner Goddess—waving it overhead like a flag of surrender I was in bed, tearing through celebrity weeklies for inspiration.”

Lippmann moves us through backpacking at age 19, discovering a mole and the belief that it’s malignant, the fucked up media industry that has the narrator ready to plunge into plastic surgery, having an affair, and then a husband who talks her into going off to a silent retreat for her 40th birthday to an ashram. And within this multi-layered story of deceit and role-playing in the most absurd surroundings, the narrator turns hilarity into unexpected moments of inner recognition and the futility of duality. *Doll Palace* is never black and white.

“Sometimes I wish I could be like her, feeling everything at once, the full spectrum right there on the surface. Every kiss, every fender bender, forgotten line in a school play, every insult from our mother, touch from our father, every exhilaration and humiliation, fingers slammed in lockers, stretching me out like a mouse in a trap, all of it.”

Get ready to feel all of it. Not sitting in a back row with popcorn, but on screen in the midst of the disquiet of self through the prosaic, the naked, the stark and vivid landscape of those damn still days that don’t even give us the opportunity to turn away from ourselves and talk about the weather.

Lippmann may write about debutantes, but has never been a debut. Her work is timeless and unflinching. Don’t miss out! **DAMN BRILLIANT!**

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Robert Vaughan says

You will want to read this entire riveting collection of short stories in one day- but trust me, don't! Savor them, each one is a jewel! Or plow through them with your heart racing, and then re- read them with delight. I plan to! Either way, please get this book... NOW!

Kathy says

Superb collection. My review at The Lit Pub blog: <http://thelitpub.com/the-whole-world-...>

Steven says

Although you will be continually surprised by all the original smiles and metaphors - the primary technique in these stories is metonymy achieved with an avalanche of concrete details. This is maximalist writing to the max and quite impressive. These are also voice driven stories, stories where you are inside the character and looking out. A strong example of character and language driven short fiction. If you don't read a lot of short fiction, I think this collection would blow you away, perhaps shock you at how much depth of character can be portrayed in a few thousand words. If you read a lot of short fiction, I think you can be impressed with the writing, and impressed with the collection as a whole, as I was, while not necessarily being blown away by the individual stories.
