



Antarctica

By Claire Keegan

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Published to great critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic, the iridescent stories in Claire Keegan's debut collection, *Antarctica*, have been acclaimed by *The Observer* to be "among the finest contemporary stories written recently in English." In "Antarctica," a married woman travels out of town to see what it's like to sleep with a man other than her husband. "Love in the Tall Grass" takes Cordelia down a coastal road on the last day of the twentieth century to keep a date with her lover that has been nine years in the waiting. "Stay Close to the Water's Edge" tells of a young Harvard student who is pitilessly humiliated by his homophobic stepfather on his birthday. Keegan's writing has a clear vision of unaffected truths and boldly explores a world where dreams, memory, and chance have crippling consequences for those involved. The stories are often dark and enveloped in a palpable atmosphere, and the reader feels that something "big" is going on in each of these carefully sculpted tales. The award-winning *Antarctica*, a *Los Angeles Times* Best Book of 2001, and recipient of the prestigious Rooney Prize for Irish Literature, the William Trevor Prize, and the Martin Healy Award, is a haunting debut. "These stories are diamonds." -- Emily Robichaud, *Esquire* "That Keegan has a knack for storytelling is proved many times over...." -- Caitlin Macy, *The New York Times Book Review* "[These] stories ... show Keegan to be an authentic talent with a gimlet eye and a distinctive voice." -- Amanda Heller, *The Boston Globe* "Reading these stories is like coming upon work of Ann Beattie or Raymond Carver at the start of their careers." -- Jerry Griswold, *Los Angeles Times*

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The chill reaches to the bones of this debut collection of 15 stories by Keegan, an acclaimed young Irish writer whose precisely articulated, clear prose illuminates her native land. In Keegan's Ireland, it is eternally winter, and familial relations provide neither appeasing warmth nor protection. Her mostly female narrators dwell on the cusp of self-knowledge; they have ruefully observed the example set by their mothers, aunts and grandmothers "flat-bellied, temperamental women who've given up and call it happiness" and are slowly feeling out new possibilities for their own lives. Rebellions range from the small and symbolic (a mother takes the wheel of a car and leaves her husband stranded) to the wider-reaching (a woman decides to keep her illegitimate child). Such victories cannot keep the harshness of the world at bay and are of little help, for example, to the couple whose daughter is kidnapped. Yet Keegan depicts the ascendance of a generation of women who "can butt in and take over, rescue and be rescued" in an Ireland on the verge of a self-generated wave of feminism. The setting of several stories in the U.S. (where Keegan did her undergraduate work) is indicated only by a smattering of details such as baseball hats and fast food; they might as well, and with greater effect, have been set in Ireland. While Keegan's imagery occasionally bears the clear brand of the M.F.A. program, these moments are few and are outweighed by the restraint with which she deploys such imagery, and by her stern refusal to fall back on anything that might resemble a happy ending. (July) Forecast: Keegan is a comer in Ireland, where she won both the William Trevor Prize and the Rooney Prize in 2000. A keen and unflinching observer, she will appeal to fans of Roddy Doyle. Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Irish author Keegan's reputation precedes her by leaps and bounds. First published across the pond in 1999, this collection won the William Trevor and Rooney prizes and has been called Raymond Carver-esque by the British press. True, these 16 tales, which range from Ireland to the southern United States, are carried by simple and compound sentences with smatterings of dialog, but, just like the human body, a short story requires more than a skeleton. What's lacking here can only be described as emotional intensity literal blood and marrow; protagonist after protagonist fails to come to life. The title piece sets the tone: a middle-aged housewife visits London in search of Christmas presents for her family and a one-night stand but ends up handcuffed to a stranger's bed. Although the reader wants to experience her terror, they will feel indifferent to the hell she's condemned herself to. Antarctica is a chilly let-down, but followers of contemporary Irish literature should still keep their eye on Keegan. She's young and is currently working on a potentially promising first novel. Heather McCormack, "Library Journal" Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From [Booklist](#)

This gathering of short stories, some of which are prizewinners, is Irish author Keegan's first collection. Although there is a marked unevenness in the quality of the stories, the author's talent shines through, making the collection well worth reading in spite of some of the stories' flaws. Most of the stories are set in Ireland and some in Louisiana and other miscellaneous southern U.S. locations. It is clear that the author's voice is more at home when writing of Ireland, but her feel for the atmosphere of the American South rings true. Among the best stories are "Antarctica," a macabre tale of a town woman off to the city for an adventure; "Sisters," a satisfying tale of the plain, stay-at-home sister finally pushed to action; and "Passport Soup," a depiction of grief turned to madness. Keegan's skill and strength will undoubtedly develop, and readers should look forward to seeing her next book. *Danise Hoover*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Merideth Davis:

This Antarctica are generally reliable for you who want to be described as a successful person, why. The reason why of this Antarctica can be one of many great books you must have is actually giving you more than just simple reading food but feed an individual with information that maybe will shock your previous knowledge. This book is definitely handy, you can bring it everywhere and whenever your conditions both in e-book and printed kinds. Beside that this Antarctica forcing you to have an enormous of experience such as rich vocabulary, giving you tryout of critical thinking that could it useful in your day task. So , let's have it and revel in reading.

Herbert White:

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Geneva Richardson:

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Arthur Bailey:

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