



## Three Scenarios In Which Hana Sasaki Grows A Tail

*Kelly Luce*

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*Three Scenarios in Which Hana Sasaki Grows a Tail* is a debut collection of stories from Kelly Luce. *Hana Sasaki* will introduce you to many things—among them, an oracular toaster, a woman who grows a tail, and an extraordinary sex-change operation. Set in Japan, these stories tip into the fantastical, plumb the power of memory, and measure the human capacity to love.

## Three Scenarios In Which Hana Sasaki Grows A Tail Details

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Author : Kelly Luce

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## From Reader Review Three Scenarios In Which Hana Sasaki Grows A Tail for online ebook

### **Kelly says**

Goodreads recommended this book to me just now based on what I'd read recently. Turns out I've already read it! Good call, goodreads.

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### **Sara Shakouri says**

I picked this book out of sheer boredom: it was short and I felt some traces of Murakami are within, which makes me dislike a book without any sense of disappointment. Surprise! SURPRISE! This is how Mr. Murakami should learn to write his short stories: elements of magic/extraordinary/whatever you name it are there, but the stories are way way more humane. With precision, compassion and a wry humor, Kelly Luce makes deep cuts into the lives of her characters, and offers a closer look of these (mostly) outsiders. Definitely a recommendation.

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### **Sarah says**

I had never heard of Kelly Luce before reading this collection, and I'm pretty impressed. Her style is very imaginative and, at times, surreal. Her best stories are enchanting to read. The last four or so stories were all so wonderful that I had to read them in one sitting. I enjoyed the theme of expatriatism in this collection--many of Luce's characters are outsiders, which provides intriguing internal conflict. All of the stories (if I'm not mistaken) take place in Japan but are narrated by/incorporate expatriate characters who have varying reasons for ending up where they did; I enjoyed that aspect of this collection, particularly, because it made the stories feel like they were all situated within the same universe, like one character from one story might bump into another character from another story on the subway. I appreciate the care Luce took in compiling these stories for this collection.

That said, however, I did not like a couple of these, though they did all fit in with the themes of the collection. All in all, this is a solid debut, and I'm intrigued to see what Luce puts out in the future.

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### **Anita says**

Extremely enjoyable debut collection. At certain moments felt a little like Murakami, but more often emotionally weird, rather than cerebrally surreal. Especially liked "Rooey" and "Amorometer" and "Ms. Yamada's Toaster."

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### **Zach says**

The elements of Kelly Luce's writing sneak up on you. There is subtle humor, understated emotion, patient action. Even the fantasy is maintained at a slow boil, so you can watch as each bubble grows then pops. One could make the obvious comparisons - Aimee Bender and Kelly Link, for example - but the surreal and supernatural parts of Luce's stories read as whispers. Each story seems only half-aware of the magic within itself. These are high-concept stories in which the story masks the concept. The effect can be jarring, or maybe the opposite - being jarred by the lack of jarringness. Even more than matter-of-fact, the surreal elements are forgettable, at least for the characters who experience them. But the internal irrelevance of the surreal makes it somehow more compelling for a reader.

I don't know anyone who's written magic realism (or whatever you want to call it) quite like this, and I can only hope that Kelly Luce keeps the stories coming. In addition, this book is a great debut for the new press A Strange Object, and I look forward to their future offerings.

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### Allie says

*Three Scenarios in Which Hana Sasaki Grows a Tail* is both the debut collection of Kelly Luce and the debut title from the Austin-based small press A Strange Object. My, do they make a good team.

Beautifully written and meticulously edited, *Hana Sasaki* contains a little over a hundred pages of stories that circle the subject of Japan. Writing from both insiders' and outsider's perspective, Luce constructs stories that sneak up on you. I found myself thinking about stories and images from this collection long after I finished reading it.

The strangeness in these stories is wonderfully understated, and the surrealism comes just as much from the characters' emotional lives as it does from the hills of golden volcanic ash or the titular tail. The stories are concrete rather than abstract or allegorical, and even the strangest ones seem populated with real people inhabiting a real space. I especially enjoyed Luce's clear, deadpan prose, which had a sharp eye for detail and an ear for humor.

You can read the collection's closing story, "Amorometer", here. I recommend you do.

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### Corrie Francis says

Transported me to a foreign land where, when something odd happens, well... it's still odd, just not quite as odd as it should be. Captured my imagination and made me wish for more stories!

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### Julianne (Outlandish Lit) says

[3.5, but rounded up]

**I'm not sure why I expected this collection of short stories to be creepy, but I did and I was slightly misled by that.** Though certainly strange, they're often delightful or beautifully haunting. Bizarre things happen, like people growing tails or a toaster predicting how people will die, but these are fully stories about reality and humans' relations to one another.

All of these stories are based in or focused on Japan, where Luce lived for three years. **What was so lovely about these stories was how they were all told by or about outsiders**, be they gaijin (foreigners) or Japanese people who feel like they are on the outskirts of their communities. I was startled by the appearance of demons and magical karaoke machines just as much as I was by how gently Luce could break my heart and tenderly stitch it back together again with her hope for our world.

**FAVORITE STORIES:** The Blue Demon of Ikumi, Ash, Rooey, Cram Island

**Full review:** Outlandish Lit - 3 Startling Short Story Collections

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### **Richard Thomas says**

A hypnotizing selection of stories told with an insightful, lyrical voice. There is an air of danger, but also some humor, lots of heart, and a touch of magic—a very unique POV. I hear bits of Aimee Bender, Kelly Link, and Haruki Murakami in here, but Kelly is her own storyteller, and this slim volume was a pleasure to read.

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### **Casey Hannan says**

The rare time I pick a book off the shelf and it's the right book for me beginning to end. There's a lot here that's magical, and you'll see many comparisons to the authors you'd expect, but I found myself comfortable in these stories in the same way I am in the stories of Alice Munro. If Munro's stories coil long and spiral in and out of their own tails, Luce's stories are the abbreviated versions and no less vivid and polite in their completeness for that abbreviation. Each story is a whole "strange object," writing that's not continuously one-upping itself with surprising lines but rather sits in your thoughts later like a song. (And as a writer, I commend Luce's ordering of these stories. Perfect cohesion. The stories hold hands gladly.)

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### **Scott Semegran says**

I was turned onto this book at my local bookstore by the store manager who said it had hints of magical realism and was also their bestseller. My interest was piqued. Plus, the author had spent time in Austin at the Michener Center, which I thought was pretty cool. All the short stories had some relation to Japan, whether they were set in Japan or have Japanese characters or characters obsessed with Japanese culture. There were only 10 stories in this small book and I'd break them down into three lengths: micro, shorter, and longer stories. The shortest story was 3 pages; the longest was 26 pages.

Both micro stories were unsatisfying, too short to unfold in any meaningful way besides being impressionistic. Like a skilled painter using a one-inch wide paintbrush on a 2 by 2-inch square canvas, the skilled stroke of each micro story didn't paint much of a scene or story. The writer in me thought, 'Kind of interesting.' The reader in me thought, 'Wish there was more.'

The five shorter stories were hit or miss: two being exceptional, one having a funny premise but lacking some background information about the narrator that made the story feel under baked, and two that were eerie yet lackluster. The story titled *Ms. Yamada's Toaster* had the funny premise of a toaster that could

predict how people would die--soon after many did die in their predicted fashion--then the omniscient toaster with the penchant for predicting someone's mortality suddenly breaks. Pretty funny story idea! The best of these shorter stories, *Wisher*, was an amazing piece about a gardener who could hear the wishes of the people who tossed coins into the garden fountain. It was poignant, magical, and heartbreaking--all at once.

The longer stories were where the author really shined. Having a larger canvas to build her worlds, the three longest stories were the best of the book: *Rooey*, *Pioneers*, and *Amorometer*. The longer story-length gave the author enough room to explore the themes of these stories: loneliness, relationships, death, repressed sexual feelings, desire, and depression. The author skillfully fleshed out her characters with all the ticks, mannerisms, and personalities of three-dimensional human beings, a hard task to accomplish in short stories. And the author's ability to use imaginative similes didn't go unnoticed. "He scratched his beard. He'd stopped trimming it, and these days it resembled a storm cloud about to burst." Fantastic imagery! In *Amorometer*, a widowed college professor writes a lovelorn letter to a former female research participant from the 1960s who had the highest score of all the participants in his important study using the Amorometer, a device capable of measuring one's capacity to love. Out of curiosity and loneliness, she agrees to meet him even though she's married. But as powerful as the Amorometer seemed to be to measure one's capacity to love, it couldn't measure one's capacity to lie, a characteristic which the former female research participant had in spades.

Now, I see this book as a primer for a longer work like the novel *Pull Me Under*, which I look forward to reading. I wish this small collection of short stories contained more but, if the longer stories in this book are proof, then I look forward to diving into the novel *Pull Me Under*. Kelly Luce is a fantastic writer!

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### **Marie-Therese says**

I unreservedly loved this and am tempted to give it five stars. So, let's say, 4.5

Just a terrific collection of brief, often ambiguous, haunting tales. Saying too much about any of them would likely spoil their initial impact, so I'll just note that all the stories reference Japan in some way (most are set in Japan) and Japanese folk lore and aesthetics inform each of them (sometimes subtly, often in a more overt manner). Luce's prose is masterly; concise and graceful, her sentences bespeak a writer who knows not only what she wants to say but also precisely how she wants to say it. There is nothing excessive here, almost nothing that doesn't serve the story. These are clean, controlled tales that somehow incorporate magical imagery and rich imagination without adding bloat. A very special blend, too little found. I think I've just talked myself into adding that last half star.

Very highly recommended for anyone who loves a good short story.

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### **Charles Dee Mitchell says**

Luce's carefully observed, contemporary Japanese settings include Tokyo, small country towns, and an out-of-the-way inn. Her stories feature Japanese teenagers, pensioners, and academics, along with American expatriates. As for her plots, well, Hana Sasaki is not the only character to grow a tail. The fantastic slips unobtrusively into her narratives. There is a toaster that can predict the cause of a person's death. A rundown karaoke joint houses a gateway to another world. Coins tossed into a fountain tell their stories to the old man

who collects them. There is also practical advice on how to handle the Tokyo legal system. (Hint: plead guilty.)

There are only ten stories in this elegantly produced book by a new small press, but they contain an imagination that suggests a world that crosses path with our own in surprising, sometimes melancholy ways. Luce's prose leads the reader into her world, and it proves to be a wonderful place to spend time

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### **James Conrad says**

If imaginations were muscles Kelly Luce's would look like Arnold Schwarzenegger. This book is full of clear, precise, beautiful writing (not "pretty" writing; there is a difference) and surprising insights to, as some writer once said (George Saunders?) "what it's like to be a goddamn human." If you're looking for something a little different, in a really good way, read this one.

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### **Erika Dreifus says**

Please see my interview with author Kelly Luce (based on a complimentary advance reading copy of the book) right here.

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