



## Get in Trouble

*Kelly Link*

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She has been hailed by Michael Chabon as “the most darkly playful voice in American fiction” and by Neil Gaiman as “a national treasure.” Now Kelly Link’s eagerly awaited new collection--her first for adult readers in a decade--proves indelibly that this bewitchingly original writer is among the finest we have.

Link has won an ardent following for her ability to take readers deep into an unforgettable, brilliantly constructed fictional universe with each new story. In “The Summer People,” a young girl in rural North Carolina serves as uneasy caretaker to the mysterious, never-quite-glimpsed visitors who inhabit the cottage behind her house. In “I Can See Right Through You,” a middle-aged movie star makes a disturbing trip to the Florida swamp where his former on- and off-screen love interest is shooting a ghost-hunting reality show. In “The New Boyfriend,” a suburban slumber party takes an unusual turn, and a teenage friendship is tested, when the spoiled birthday girl opens her big present: a life-size animated doll.

Hurricanes, astronauts, evil twins, bootleggers, Ouija boards, iguanas, *The Wizard of Oz*, superheroes, the Pyramids...These are just some of the talismans of an imagination as capacious and as full of wonder as that of any writer today. But as fantastical as these stories can be, they are always grounded in sly humor and an innate generosity of feeling for the frailty--and the hidden strengths--of human beings. In *Get in Trouble*, this one-of-a-kind talent expands the boundaries of what short fiction can do.

## Get in Trouble Details

Date : Published February 3rd 2015 by Random House (first published January 13th 2015)

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Author : Kelly Link

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# From Reader Review Get in Trouble for online ebook

## Peter Boyle says

Get in Trouble was a recent finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and Kelly Link's short stories have been compared to the works of Angela Carter, Ray Bradbury and Shirley Jackson. Those sounded like pretty decent credentials to me so I sought out a copy and gleefully buried my nose in its wonderfully odd pages.

What I enjoyed most about this collection was its unpredictability. Just when you're sure you know where Link is going with a story, she takes you down a road you never even knew existed. These eerie, unsettling tales fling you out of your comfort zone and into a Bermuda triangle of fantasy, populated by dubious fairies, living dolls and existential superheroes among others.

Some of them just flat out didn't work for me, like Valley of the Girls with its wealthy, bored teenagers building pyramids for kicks. But the ones that did will linger long in my memory - The Lesson is a moving account of a gay couple preparing for the birth of a surrogate child during their attendance at an unusual wedding, and the seriously creepy Two Houses is a ghost story with a difference. Brrrrrr - I just got the shivers recalling that one!

The boldness of the creativity and imagination on display in this often dazzling collection deserves a lot of praise. Always strange but never boring - Link is an enchanting, delightfully weird voice that is well worth seeking out.

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## Joachim Stoop says

This is one of the few times I gave 5 stars to a short story collection. There's always this one or those two stories spoiling the perfect score. Not here!

It's weird how many versions of weird there are: Borges-weird, Calvino-weird, Poe-weird, Vandermeer-weird, Millhauser-weird, Lucia Berlin-weird, The story of my teeth-weird, etc. etc.

Strange stories that allow us to dive into depths of imagination without the worry of having lost our minds. How fun is that in our awfully sane society (on the outside that is).

The difficulty with all-out-fantastic tales is to keep them compelling, engaging, fun, cool and even humane and within limits. Kelly Link had me hooked, blown away, laughing, gasping, thinking, imagining, seeing and there was still enough heart in there to be moved.

I'll now read everything she's ever written (with enough sane books in between)

Btw. The audiobook is great!

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## Julie Parks says

I love Kelly Link in every story she comes, but this...this is simply brilliant.

The stories as I'm slowly journeying through them:

### **THE SUMMER PEOPLE**

The best thing about this story is the mysticism that surrounds the so-called summer people in comparison with the personage we actually "see" appearing in the story (think Facebook profiles, the ones with constant updates from people you don't actually know at all in real life). It draws parallels and points you right in the eye like a toothpick all the pretense people surround themselves with on a daily basis, like a cloak, like an aura, like a Facebook status, like a new name...like they're summer people who only come by for a special display that's only seen through rumors and stories anyway. But that's their reality, as real as it gets. No matter what you do, just follow Fran's directions...she knows how to get around them and stay alive!

### **I CAN SEE RIGHT THROUGH YOU**

This is actually a murder mystery though you won't know it until the very last few paragraphs. There are so many highlights in this one that speak sheer brilliance true to Hollywood, true to everyman, true to life. There are parts of this story that are told completely (and literally) naked and parts that are just ghost. Go ahead, and tell the difference.

Funniest quote: *Everybody naked, nobody happy. It's Scandinavian art porn*

Deepest essence of the story: *It's not much fun, telling a ghost story while you're naked. Telling the parts of the ghost story that you're supposed to tell. Not telling other parts. While the woman you love stands there with the person you used to be.*

### **SECRET IDENTITY**

A sixteen-year-old girl goes to New York to meet her online crush and to crush both of their illusions of the reality they've given each other. It's also written in a letter format and filled with dentists and superheroes, and sidekicks - though obviously nobody ever wants to be someone else's sidekick.

Funniest quote: *As they navigate the lobby, there are new boards up announcing that free teeth-whitening sessions are available in suite 412 for qualified superheroes.*

Deepest essence of the story: *But a diamond is the superhero of the mineral world. Diamonds cut glass. Not the other way around.*

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## **Rashmi Tiwari says**

(quietly standing in corner)

(whispers) Okay, I do not get this book at all. In fact, after getting two thirds of the way through, I am abandoning it and walking away with my hands held high in surrender.

I found most of the stories to be too convoluted and almost smugly vague in their lack of details. I definitely love short stories and these were trying to read and not worth the effort with their verb tense switching and

inconsistencies in narrative distance. I totally get that there is some real creativity at work here but working so hard to discover the "meaning" in these stories? Not my jam. I felt like I was reading the work of a horribly pretentious hipster in a fiction workshop who tears apart everyone else and then submits something like this (probably that story about the Faces) and waits for everyone to bask in the genius that is just LIFTING off the page.

(backs out of room silently)

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### **Maxwell says**

I love odd stories, but some of these were just too out there for me to understand what was happening, and that frustrated me. No doubt Kelly Link has a vivid imagination and unique sensibility, but I didn't love these as much as I'd hoped.

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### **Rachel Jones says**

I'm sorry, but this book of short stories must surely be a joke. Somewhere, with several someones, the wooden characters, laughably bad dialogue, and idiotic details (both real and fantastical) that served only to highlight how desperately the author wanted to add "quirk," all passed muster?

I'm guessing this book will appeal to the same type of reader who enjoyed *Where'd You Go, Bernadette*, *Swamplandia!*, or anything by Neil Gaiman. In other words, readers who don't mind crappy stories and barely average prose at best, as long as there's some Weirddness! Twee! Flights of Imagination! Inexplicable Idiosyncrasies Abounding!

The only reason I finished this is because I won it in a First Readers Giveaway, but I'm afraid I can't recommend it to anyone else, or get my 5 hours back.

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### **Althea Ann says**

\*\*\*\*\* The Summer People

This story could function as a wonderful introduction to Link's writing. It features many of the elements and themes that pop up again and again in her stories, and is executed wonderfully.

Here, we have the elements of classic fairytales ("Be bold, be bold. But not too bold – lest that your heart's blood should run cold.") which emerge in a lovely, but seemingly prosaic modern setting. We have the interactions of teenage girls, a legacy passed down through generations. We have things so beautiful and mysterious that they hurt the heart - with a dark undercurrent of dread and disgust. And of course, questionable motivations and an ending that while ambiguous, feels altogether 'right.'

Since, for me, this wasn't an introduction to her work, it was a reminder of all the reasons I admire her so much.

\*\*\*\* I Can See Right Through You

While reading this story, an image came into my mind: that of holding a carefully carved but strangely shaped object in my hands. Blindfolded, the reader gently explores the odd and spiky contours of this object,

carefully hefting its weight, unsure of its exact measurements...

Link's stories are like that precisely crafted but unidentified object.

Here, she spins us a tale of the fraught relationship between two celebrities. I'm usually not one for feeling too much sympathy for the tribulations of the rich and famous, but this piece worked very well. (And, the grand finale at the haunted (?) nudist resort was the perfect mix of weird and hilarious).

#### \*\*\*\*\* Secret Identity

A fifteen-year-old girl from a small town shows up at a New York City hotel to meet someone she's only chatted with online. Amidst a flurry of superheroes and dentists (the hotel is hosting two conventions), a strangely touching story emerges, with a lot to say about what 'identity' actually might be.

Although none of the details here directly apply to me or my past (no, no one has ever assumed I was a superhero's sidekick) this story perfectly captured the essence of what it was to be fifteen.

#### \*\*\*\* Valley of the Girls

Previously read (in *The Best Science Fiction and Fantasy of The Year Volume 6* – Jonathan Strahan, ed.)

This story grew on me. The first time through, I found myself not liking it as much as most of Link's work, and I kind of slid over some essential details. Then, I got to the end... and went back to the beginning, and started right over to get all those details in. It's an exploration of the consequences of celebrity, the meaning of identity... and it's also just plain creepy. Excellent.

#### \*\*\* Origin Story

This one seems to take place in the same 'world' as 'Secret Identity': a scenario where superheroes and mutants are a common and accepted part of society. At first, this conversation seems to be one between two normal (if a bit messed-up) teenagers, but gradually more is revealed: both supernatural and mundane. I didn't feel that this one was as strong as others in this collection.

#### \*\*\*\* The New Boyfriend

Previously read (in *Monstrous Affections*)

On the face of it, this story is a bit teenage-y – but Link's trademark weirdness suffuses it. Here we have a group of four high school friends. Ainslie's a bit more indulged by her mother than the rest of them, and has been given not just one but all THREE models of the hottest new 'toy' – realistic robot 'boyfriends.' The models are Vampire, Werewolf, and the latest, hard-to-get version, Ghost. Ainslie's best friend, Immy, is consumed with jealousy – she desperately wants a fake boyfriend of her own. Things get even more complicated when it seems that the 'ghost' boyfriend may be genuinely haunted.

#### \*\*\*\* Two Houses

Previously read (in *The Best Science Fiction and Fantasy of the Year, Volume 7* – Jonathan Strahan, ed.)

A small group of astronauts, far out in lonely space, tell each other ghost stories and succeed in freaking each other out. I actually really liked the main 'secondary' story in the piece (creepy art installation!), but I didn't think that the parallel that was set up worked as well as it should have.

#### \*\*\* Light

This one felt very, very familiar - I think I may have previously read it online (it was first published in 2007.) It takes place in a future Florida where things have gone 'weird': pocket universes are everywhere, alien oddities bleed into our world, and children with double shadows can 'develop' twins. In this world, a hard-drinking but oddly responsible woman works managing a warehouse full of sleeping bodies. In her off hours she has to deal with her difficult gay twin, and picks up men at the local bars. I loved the setting, but in this one, the ending felt too random and inconclusive for me.

Many, many thanks to NetGalley and Random House for the opportunity to read this excellent collection of Link's work. As always, my opinions are solely my own.

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### **Lynn says**

I like to read short stories as little breaks between other books, but this collection was so good I couldn't stop at just one. I had to read it through. These were wonderfully odd stories that were whole worlds unto themselves. There were common threads sprinkled between some of them: travel to pocket universes, people with double shadows, and minor super powers. In all of these imaginative realities, the emotions were always convincing. Link offers a bit of fantasy, horror, sci-fi and magic. Great read.

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### **Diane S ? says**

3.5 Such an imagination, and many surprises await the reader. Stories that seem to be going one way and then veer into the unexpected. Never quite sure where I was, what type of world, what type of situation but it didn't matter, just went along for the ride. The only story I did not crew for was Demon Lover and the first one, The Summer People was my favorite. Loved the specialness, the magical feeling of wonder this one gave me. So different, so special.

ARC from NetGalley.

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### **Esil says**

I got a free copy of this book from Netgalley. I was happy to have an opportunity to read it. Link is clearly a well liked author for many people and she writes outside of any genre or style that I usually read. Her stories take place in worlds that are surreal, but her writing is understated and presents these worlds in a matter of fact dead pan manner -- so, for example, superheroes, ghosts, robot boyfriends are just part of the everyday fabric of somewhat creepy but ordinary people's lives. I have found it hard to rate this book I suspect because it was a bit out of my comfort zone and I don't tend to gravitate toward the surreal or magical realism. But I really enjoyed some of the stories and truly appreciated Link's ability to convey with a quirky sense of humour these imagined worlds and characters -- The Summer People, The Secret Identity and The Boyfriend were amongst my favourites. However, I must admit that there were two or three stories that didn't work for me and that I had trouble getting through. Ultimately, my rating is based on the stories I enjoyed and Link's clever imagination.

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### **Elizabeth says**

You know that moment in every action film - the one where the hero has to dive into cold water to deactivate the reactor or turn a lever that is only accessible underwater? They stand on the edge of a dark, unfamiliar pool and calmly fill their lungs with with air before diving head first. The audience instinctively holds its breath as well, some joking to see if the amount of time that passes on screen is even possible and others for

the thrill of watching their heroes come so close to an aqua-marine-death.

A lot of build up but that is how I felt while reading this collection of short stories. Every (EVERY) story felt like jumping into an icy pool and trying very hard to hold your breath for the 30 odd pages. Unlike your heroes of cinema, you don't need oxygen while reading *Get In Trouble* because for a short time the only thing that matters is the world and characters Kelly Link creates.

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### **Snotchocheez says**

I'm guessing Kelly Link and Karen Russell were separated at birth. Not only are they both Floridians, they're both wildly imaginative short story writers with a bent toward magical realism. (Ms. Russell whimsically leaning toward anthropomorphized fruit bats, silkworms and barnyard animals, Ms. Link opting for superheroes, squirrels, snakes, and semi-lifelike dolls). They both force you to look at relationships and the world around us in a cockeyed, off-kilter, and wholly original manner.

*Get in Trouble* is my first Kelly Link experience; I can assure you it won't be my last. This is a lovely mix of stories, ranging from the hyper-realistic to the absurd. I thoroughly enjoyed six of the nine stories here: from the Southern Gothic creeper "The Summer People" (featuring a summer house swallowed by Appalachian kudzu, filled with enchantments, resided by unseen spirits...either benevolent or evil); to "The New Boyfriend" (about two teen girls' obsessions over a set of "boyfriends": life-sized dolls); to "Secret Identity" (where a lonely 15 year-old Iowan MMORPG-playing girl entices a thirty-something year-old man to a NYC hotel tryst...with plenty of unpredictable twists). My favorites were the stories most grounded in reality (like "The Lesson", about a gay couple caught in a conundrum: attend a wedding at an island off the Carolina coast, or await the problematic birth of their child from a surrogate mother) but most all the stories (even the most outlandish, like "Light" and "Two Houses" had some deliciously weird food for thought to offer.) (Okay, maybe not "Valley of the Girls"; that one kinda sucked bad, and dropped my rating of the collection a whole star, but it's hard to expect every story from an innovative writer like Ms. Link to hit a home run.)

I know a few of my GR friends might be scared off by my comparison of Ms. Link to Ms. Russell (and George Saunders), but I wouldn't be too afraid: despite the collection's out-there themes, *Get in Trouble* has a little something for everyone.

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### **zxvasdf says**

I get the inevitable comparisons to Karen Russell. I get it. The difference there is, Russell's stories are the day-to-day that shimmer with a nimbus of magic, while Link's worlds are magical, and profoundly steeped with the ordinary.

This short story collection is a froth of bubbles, each one an universe of possibility, and in its pages, we pass through these walls into a world of magical ordinariness. "The Summer People" eases us into this strange new world; out in the summer cottage with a sick girl and her acquaintance, it's a while before we realize things are amiss.

"The Two Houses" is a gorgeous rendition of a gothic ghost story and science-fiction. The two genres blend and blur their lines until it becomes a nascent marriage in the flickering firelight of high technology and the



cool shadows of hauntings which culminate in a shuddering, self-referential revelation. This is my absolute favorite of the lot.

Though, strangely enough, "Light" is the one I think of when *Get in Trouble* is referenced. I think it's because it actually, in the guise of a lonely woman who has cast herself adrift, a worldbuilding trick Link uses to explain and unify the stories within the collection, and, having not read any of her other stories, possibly the entirety of her writing career.

*Get in Trouble* is about people who are already in trouble. The getting into trouble is done with, and what we're seeing is the aftermath. The truth is, getting in trouble isn't always a bad thing. It is merely an agent of change where you rail against the established rules and break free for personal development, everyone and everything else be damned. Granted, there is magic in the stories here, but all these people are utterly human sentiments; they're fragile and searching, stumbling in a darkness from which they are freed by getting in trouble.

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### **Matthew Quann says**

If Kelly Link's short stories in *Get in Trouble* share a common thread, it is that they are all opaque and difficult to wrap one's head around. Link's limited exposition works both for and against her, and some stories work best once their puzzle has been resolved. Most of these stories are set in worlds built entirely anew by Link and show an immense amount of world-building for a relatively small payout page-wise. One of the most compelling and frustrating parts of this collection is that many of the worlds seem full of mysteries waiting to be uncovered that are left unsolved by story's end. Of course, Link's intention to focus on character in peculiar sci-fi/fantasy worlds not too removed from our own is a unique and welcome approach to genre fiction.

One of my favourites in the collection, the opener *The Summer People*, focuses on a teenage girl who takes care of a family of mysterious magical creatures while contending with a drunken father and a school friend. Two stories that seem like a pair, *Secret Identity* and *Origin Story*, build a shared world in which superheroes exist and act like modern-day celebrities. Yet it is perhaps the final story, *Light* which best encompasses the highs and lows of *Get in Trouble*. *Light* introduces us to a world in which pocket universes are tourist destinations and our lead character has a dysfunctional twin brother who came to life from her second shadow (?!?!?!). There's so much interesting stuff going on here, but you'll be disappointed if you expect it to be explored in a traditional narrative.

Broadly, this is a very fun and experimental short story collection. There are many five-star stories here, and there are some that drove me mad. I'd suggest diving in just to see the prodigious world-building that Link has on display.

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### **Dianne says**

Interesting and unusual short stories. I have not read Kelly Link before and I went into this blind, so was not expecting the alternate universe I found. The stories are all very different, but it's as though our universe and its inhabitants are neatly overlaid with a bizarre alternate reality.

I am impressed and envious of Ms. Link's imagination. This book made my very left-brained head hurt. It took me over a week to work through this collection, I could only manage to absorb a story or two at a time.

Well written and mind bending, but while I am awed by Ms. Link's skills and creativity, I don't think she is quite up my alley. Recommend this to people with more "bendy" brains than mine!

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### **Dana says**

*\*Tentatively looks around\** Is it just me? Reading through the glowing reviews of this book of short stories leaves me baffled. I have never been a short story aficionado, but I always try to broaden my horizon when it comes to book genres. Unfortunately this really really didn't work for me. I think that this book is more of a case of *"it's not you, it's me"*.

I found a lot of the stories/dialogue really weird and random, and for short stories that doesn't really help. It took me so long to understand and "get into" each story that by the time I was kind of into it, it was over. Some of the stories do have really cool concepts but for me it just wasn't enough to save this collection.

### **Buy, Borrow or Bin Verdict: Bin**

Note: I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Melki says**

Though Kelly Link seems to have garnered a veritable cult following, I have somehow remained ignorant of her charms. (This was not a deliberate snub, I assure you.)

All that's behind me now. I have downed her rather murky, yet sweet Kool-Aid, and like a lemming, will blindly follow her off any cliff of her choosing.

Her latest book will hit the shelves in February 2015. It is a collection of nine wondrously dark fairy tales about teenage girls, shadow people, imaginary boyfriends, reality TV shows, surrogate mothers, iguanas, superheroes, hurricanes and ghost stories told on spaceships.

In Link's stories, fantasy meshes so seamlessly with reality, you can't separate the two with a scalpel.

I have to admit that I didn't love all the stories, but I loved enough of them to join the *We-Heart-Link* club AND to start shopping around for my next Link book.

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### **Oriana says**

OH MY GOD I JUST STARTED THIS OH MY GOD OH MY GOD OH MY GOD

