



Storm Damage

John A.A. Logan

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Winner of Best Short Story Collection in the eFestival of Words Best of the Independent eBooks Awards 2013

STORM DAMAGE is a collection of ten stories by John A. A. Logan, author of THE SURVIVAL OF THOMAS FORD

Length: 167 pages/60000 words

UNICORN ONE - Mission Control in Edinburgh has made a strange choice of astronaut for Scotland's first ever Independent Space Program

LATE TESTING - Michael survived the trenches of World War One France, but can he survive the English village he returns home to?

NAPOLEON'S CHILD - Has old Frank been alone for too long, or did a young boy really appear from the desert mysteriously one night?

AT THE EDGE OF THE KNOWN WORLD - In a very bizarre circus, a Big Top performance goes horribly wrong

THE MAGENTA TAPESTRY - Calliasta may have to sell the old house to Russian mafiosi, but is it true that the family gardener, Ernest, owns the grounds?

THE AIRMAN - A ghost story about a World War Two bombing raid over Dresden which somehow ends up in modern India

THE POND - An elderly man tries to recreate a lost love but is Nature on his side?

THE ORANGE PIG - A meeting between a pig and a wolf on a moonlit hillside leads to a night of revelations for the pig

STORM DAMAGE - How hard can it really be to make an insurance claim?

SOMETIMES ALL THE WORLD COMES DOWN* - A young man gets his teeth into something at a party

*SOMETIMES ALL THE WORLD COMES DOWN was originally published by PICADOR in NEW WRITING 13 (edited by Ali Smith and Toby Litt)

Storm Damage Details

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From Reader Review Storm Damage for online ebook

Caleb Blake says

Cross-posted from Papyrus - Independent Author Reviews (<http://papyrus.calebblake.net/2013/03/24/storm-damage-by-john-a-a-logan/>)

An anthology of ten fables which cover ground from the fictitious Scottish space program to the adventures of an orange pig in the company of wolves, *Storm Damage* seems to hint at questions which it asks the reader to elaborate on and answer; if an answer is possible.

Starting off with the unusual *Unicorn One*, a hairdresser from Glasgow becomes the first in space for the much maligned Scottish space program. The story is carried forward with a particularly mundane narrative given the topic. Personally, I like to think of this story as a statement about the cult of celebrity. The absurdity of a hairdresser becoming an astronaut for reasons of photogenicity is compounded when Russia also wants to claim her as spokesperson. I'm left remembering the countless times that celebrity has been sufficient to give someone a platform for which they are unqualified.

Late Testing is a nasty little tale using the cruelty inflicted on an individual and the rationalisation of that act as representative of a larger crime, that of the mass slaughter of war; property as rationalisation for murder. This was one of the more dramatic stories of this anthology with a powerful message and I appreciated the images the author used in the telling.

The Magenta Tapestry looks at the rise and fall of the U.S.S.R. through a bloody fable of revenge. *The Airman* may have been a message about making peace with the horror of the Dresden bombings. *The Pond* explores the value we place on obsession through the story of a wealthy man attempting to make a deal with a old rival. And the title story, *Storm Damage*, is a bitter look at how powerless we are against the people and institutions who wish to feed off us, and that our simple wishes mean nothing to those who would exploit.

Not all stories won me over. I found the more traditionally written fable of *The Orange Pig* not quite to my taste and accordingly, I don't think I found a meaning that suited me while reading. Additionally the last story, *Sometimes all the World Comes Down*, was another disjointed metaphysical exercise that I seem to come across more often as the last work of an anthology. I rarely appreciate them and this case was no exception.

However, this anthology proved again why I enjoy this author. He has a habit of making me work a little harder to connect with his message. But even if I feel I'm floundering, I can still sense something underneath the writing that may be apparent to more intelligent readers than myself. His narratives are often quite prosaic – such as in *Unicorn One* and the title story, but here he has also demonstrated some more poetic elements and imagery with *Late Testing*.

I reviewed Logan's novel *The Survival of Thomas Ford* last year and I found it to be a great experience, giving the book an honourable mention in the 2012 Papyrus Independent Fiction Award.

Michelle says

Good book

You people should just read this book yourselves and write your own review on this novel yourself and I really enjoyed reading this book very much so. Shelley MA

Michelle's Book says

I was given an ARC in exchange for my honest opinion. This book cover is on my Pinterest board and my blog, Michelle Dragalin's Journey.

Kath Middleton says

This book of short stories is elegantly told in John Logan's ethereal, dancing prose. Whatever this man says, he says it beautifully. The stories are like modern day fables, and from each one we can take a lesson, a thought; sometimes a rather deep one. It's always hard to choose favourites from a book where each story has its own place in the collection but I found Late Testing very gripping, I loved the emotional ending of The Airman and The Orange Pig really was Aesopian. A couple of the stories nudged at the theme of looking back at the end of life and did it very well.

There's no doubt that John Logan is a skillful writer. You can skate on the surface of his prose and enjoy his work but if you take a breath and go below the surface there is always so much more there than you thought (like a swan!) I usually buy short stories thinking I will read one or two between longer books but sometimes you just have to be greedy. I defy anyone to put this down once started. A memorable collection, and I hope there are more!

Allen says

Short stories, some good and some not so good.

Reb MacRath says

My shelves are filled with books that I've enjoyed and liked--two words that are inadequate when dealing with this book. It is, indeed, elemental. At the end, I felt as if I'd been flown from Kansas to Katmandu by a five-star hurricane. Deeply moved, shaken, awed: these words come closer to what I felt when I sat back, exhausted.

Storm Damage consists of ten superb examples of the prose jeweler's art. Though unpaginated, each comes impressively close to ten percent of the overall length. Is that important? In a way. It tells us right off that the author has a sense of structure that Franklin Lloyd Wright would have admired. And this sense grows

stronger as we proceed through the ten: a witch's brew of genres from sci-fi to revenge/redemption to a mystical thriller about a small child to a rousing ghost story...and on. Ten wildly disparate tales arranged into a perfect whole that leaves us winded and gasping: That's life.

I just hope the hurricane sends my stuff from Kansas.

Scot says

This is a collection of ten contemporary short stories by a Scot who is widely published in his home country. The topic matter and genre he is writing in can vary widely, though he, not surprisingly, does show an affinity for Scottish settings or characters. It is an uneven mix, though a careful attention to tone is clearly a strength of this author, and he favors a tone that combines rising existential angst, the confronting of harsh realities, and a dash of magical realism or meaningful absurdity.

A few of the stories were too busy being clever or artistic and really didn't work for me personally, but some of them were charming and others thought provoking. "At the Edge of the Known World" reminded me of Erin Morgenstern's novel *The Night Circus* while "Napoleon's Child" reminded me of an original *Star Trek* TV series plot. Here are the three I most enjoyed: "The Magenta Tapestry," which takes a nouveau riche Russian into the secret garden of the estate an elderly spinster can no longer maintain; "The Airman," connecting a WW II bomber over Dresden with an American girl in an Indian temple decades later; and my clear favorite, "The Orange Pig," a lovely fable about the eponymous protagonist dwelling on a farm where all the other pigs are green.

Dave Higgins says

This collection contains ten stories which span genres from psychological horror to fantasy, from thriller to mundane realism, but all are united by their strong characterisation and engaging style.

Unicorn One: When Scotland sends their first rocket out to explore the Solar system, they send not a scientist or a technician but a hairdresser.

Late Testing: Although the Great War has forced modernity on the cities, in the depths of the country people still believe in witches.

Napoleon's Child: A team is sent to check on the state of a series of mysterious beacons deep in the desert, but all their operator cares about is a native child who wandered in from the night.

At The Edge of The Known World: A girl watches a cruel Ringmaster struggle to control the circus.

The Magenta Tapestry: With the end of the USSR bringing economic collapse as well as freedom, the inhabitants of a decaying mansion cannot ignore an offer from the Russian Mafia.

The Airman: The last flight of a WWII bomber pilot echoes down history to a descendant of a pilot.

The Pond: a millionaire meets with his lawyer to discuss the purchase of a theatre, but reveals a different goal.

The Orange Pig: shunned by other pigs for his unnatural colour, the orange pig dreams of a greater destiny.

Storm Damage: a man tries to claim on insurance for damage to his father's farm.

Sometimes All The World Comes Down: a man sees wild animals walking among the remnants of civilisation, but are his perceptions accurate?

Apart from Late Testing and The Airman, each of the stories is told from the point of view of a single character, giving a both flawed and human perspective on events. Whether the plot turns on the threat of death or a burst drain pipe, the real events of each story occur in the head of the narrators.

As well as the solid characterisation, each story is written in fluid prose which references – but is not constrained by – the conventions of the respective genres. Where the events are fantastical the story is equally strong as genre fiction and magical realism.

Although each story is both a fragment of a unique life set in an individual universe, all the stories also comment on the self-delusion and pretension of society in various ways. From the desperate reverse elitism of Unicorn One to the pettiness of grudges in The Pond, no-one escapes their own imperfections.

Overall I enjoyed this book greatly. I would recommend it particularly to people who enjoy character-driven stories and those seeking an example of creating flawed narrators.

I received a free copy of this book.

Diane says

If someone were to take the time to write down their bizarre, terrifying, disturbing, senseless dreams, it would mirror this book. I could not finish this collection of short stories.

Elaine says

Would have enjoyed more if author had kept selections within a specified genre. Division into more than one publication would have made for a bit better reading. Did enjoy author style.

Pat says

An uneven mix with some brilliantly written and creative stories mixed in with some 'filler'. My favorites were "Late Testing", Napoleon's Child ", The Magenta Tapestry", The Airman" and "The Orange Pig", all of which have the atmospherics of the better old Twilight Zone episodes. I thought "Storm Damage" and "Sometimes All the World Comes Down" were especially weak.

Jason Beech says

Storm Damage is a short story collection from the highly regarded John A. A. Logan, most of them strong, interesting, and odd, and most having emotional pull. The stories are less about plot than themes on the human condition, heightened by magical realism and some striking imagery. Not that there aren't any plots. The stories are strong, but much of it is internal monologue, where the narrator sees much in the simplest things. An example in The Pond:

'Kundini bent his arm and searched with his fingers for her fingers until he felt them lightly flutter in his palm like a tiny bird's wings answering him across forty years.'

The book is full of such gems, many of them haunting. In Late Testing a British First World War soldier returns home, like a ghost, to find an old woman floating dead in a pond, her killers trying to keep her body down with stones. The protagonist understands the town's establishment want her land, and to get it they have treated her like a witch, like the 'other'. Feeling like 'the other' himself, with his mechanical leg, he seeks revenge for her. It pulls you under waves of darkness without seeming to try.

The collection is about many things, but loneliness scars many of the characters. In Napoleon's Child a German alone in the desert gets a mast measurement (we never find out what for, but it barely matters) wrong for the first time because a boy came out from the middle of nowhere and filled his life. One of the investigators who come out and disturb him get an earful. He asks what life is for if you cannot live for a miracle like this boy and the value of human contact.

In Unicorn One, an independent Scotland sends a woman to the outer reaches of the Solar System as an act of patriotism. They don't choose an astronaut, or any other traditional sense of a professional. They choose a hairdresser. She's escaping dodgy boyfriends and a dissatisfied life, but she finds empty space's realities so much lonelier than down there. Even with a satellite filming her for TV back home.

Storm Damage is full of such weird beauties. In fact, there's probably only a couple of conventional stories: The Magenta Tapestry, which charts a woman and her gardener's revenge on Russia, and Storm Damage, about a man learning to trust people.

I wasn't a big fan of At the Edge of the Known World, or The Orange Pig, stories with animals, including a pig that has conversations with wolves. Though both have a lot of memorable imagery, I couldn't get into either.

If you like plot-driven fiction, this might not be your cuppa, but I love James Ellroy, and this had me over a barrel with an arm pulled behind my back, demanding my attention. Great collection.

Áine says

Be sure to watch the lightning strike as the kindle loads the cover. It sets the mood for these very unusual and spiritual stories. Logan has done it again with his second eBook: the atmospherics of these stories take on lives of their own. Choosing a favorite would be as difficult as choosing a favorite child. Each story is unique and magical, casting its own spell, and the order is absolutely perfect, keeping the 'fictive trance' alive from beginning to end.

Each story has its own cogent observations such as the unlikely astronaut in UNICORN ONE, travelling through the universe with only Angus the toy cat for company, describing the intense loneliness; the universal face; the restlessness and seething nature of the hearts of space. Earth and Space.

Then the young soldier with the "soft, Holy,brown eyes", in LATE TESTING, who avenges an evil act and returns to the hot dry battlefield to be tried by fire a second time. "There was always something beyond the eyes looking at you too, inspecting and questioning." You will meet Cromwell and the relic of a 260-year-old witch, the self-righteous Abel, and the color purple will take on new meaning for you. Fire and Water.

NAPOLEON'S CHILD will "wow" you. I immediately checked the tweets from S.E.T.I., and thought of Dr. Ellie Arroway spinning through the wormholes of space. Or you might be reminded of Field Marshall Rommel in the North African desert or more aptly the story might evoke for you Napoleon Bonaparte staring at the Sphinx or at Ozymandias in the Egyptian desert. Earth.

EDGE OF THE KNOWN WORLD is about a supernatural circus where the animals and "arsonist clowns" stage a revolt. The universe intervenes. A child who has gaped and clapped at evil night after night seeks redemption and purification. Fire and Wind.

MAGENTA TAPESTRY. This story will appeal, as will they all, to the magic realism fans who people the Amazon world. The strange hum of the gardens, the secret door, and above all the Tapestry which feels "like dried spider legs." After reading this I had a dream about characters stepping into and from that Tapestry. Atavism and Ernest conspire in this story of murder and deceit. Water.

THE AIRMAN, mystical and wondrous. I read it aloud to a friend and we were both sobbing at the end. You will experience the fires of Dresden and the heat of an Indian summer through the eyes of an empath. You'll also learn about a "Bomber's Moon" and what it was like for those terrified soldiers to parachute out of a dying plane to the fires of hell. You will soar above the Rhineland: This is a a beautiful story. Fire and Water.

THE POND was maybe the most powerful story in the collection; a story of memory and metamorphosis. Ovid meets Aristophanes? An old man's money allows him to become that which he hates and the recipient of the money "sells" his artistic achievement. Water. Soren Rasberdsen and Milos Kundini remember.

THE ORANGE PIG is a captivating and powerful allegory, perhaps reminiscent of Animal Farm but far more poetic. The Orange Pig discovers the mountain and finds it sacred. The language is rich with symbolism and totemic references. The wolves lie down with the pigs on the plain of ceremony and it was good. Amen. I loved this story. And you will hear some echoes of Yeats, too.

The title story STORM DAMAGE has a section where the narrator wears his father's hat and then sees his da in the mirror. I'll not spoil the meaning of damage and storm for the reader. Wind and Water and Sun and Earth.

Last, but not least, SOMETIMES ALL THE WORLD COMES DOWN is an intense psychological narrative with lightning and thunder and wolves battling in the mind of the narrator.

For fans of Logan's last book THE SURVIVAL OF THOMAS FORD, this is a "must read." Sounds trite, but I was very sorry when the last story was finished. The collection will leave you unsettled in the eye of the storm, or "flopped across the iron gate" buffeted by the wind.
