

**You Won't Remember This**

Blackwell, Kate (Author)

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Ages

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Blackwell's debut collection vividly draws on the Southern storytelling tradition in its 12 gentle but unsentimental stories. In "My First Wedding," an unnamed narrator remembers her first peek at the rituals of Southern bridehood when her cousin Augusta married a Yankee.

"Heartbeatland" is Anne Tyler territory: Anne and David, transplants to North Carolina who call themselves "the Schoolmaster" and "Princess Annabel," develop sarcastic nicknames for their neighbors, but when David dies, Anne finds herself simultaneously relying on and distrusting the "neigh-boors." Blackwell illustrates her stories with sharp and sometimes unsettling word snapshots: a past-its-prime piñata disgorges "misshapen" candy "mottled with mold"; a miserably pregnant woman plods "around the garden, holding her enormous stomach, her legs like an elephant's." Even "Pepper Hunt," a disturbing five-page story about a divorced man and his daughter meeting in a luncheonette, is a pinpoint novella with fully drawn characters. If Blackwell has one unifying theme, it's how ritual both distances people and enables them to live together. This shrewd collection should appeal to fans of contemporary Southern short story masters like Tim Gautreaux and John Biguenet.(June)

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