



Nothing Looks Familiar

Shawn Syms

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In *Nothing Looks Familiar*, Shawn Syms' debut story collection, characters from a wide swath of society chart paths from places of danger or unhappiness into the great unknown, each grappling with a central and sometimes unanswerable question: if you fight to change your circumstances, could it be possible to reconfigure your very identity? From bullied kids to meth-smoking mothers, characters in dire straits take measures?sometimes drastic ones?to take charge of their own fates.

With a particular focus on the lives of the downtrodden and marginalized, *Nothing Looks Familiar* marries a vivid and distinct sense of place?the sights and smells of a meatpacking plant; a church-basement meeting hall full of sexual abusers?with universal themes such as the nature of friendship and relationships, and the configuration of the self. In this book, men and women alike struggle to cope, to survive, and to transform their surroundings; each of them is determined to come out the other side changed. In these richly drawn, deeply nuanced stories, nothing may look familiar, but everything is up for grabs.

Shawn Syms is an author and journalist who has written for fifty-plus publications over twenty-five years.



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