



## The Mount: A Novel

*Carol Emshwiller*

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\* Philip K. Dick Award Winner

\* Best of the Year: *Locus, Village Voice, San Francisco Chronicle, Book Magazine*

\* Nominated for the Impac Award

Charley is an athlete. He wants to grow up to be the fastest runner in the world, like his father. He wants to be painted crossing the finishing line, in his racing silks, with a medal around his neck. Charley lives in a stable. He isn't a runner, he's a mount. He belongs to a Hoot: The Hoots are alien invaders. Charley hasn't seen his mother for years, and his father is hiding out in the mountains somewhere, with the other Free Humans. The Hoots own the world, but the humans want it back. Charley knows how to be a good mount, but now he's going to have to learn how to be a human being.

"I've been a fan of Carol Emshwiller's since the wonderful *Carmen Dog*. *The Mount* is a terrific novel, at once an adventure story and a meditation on the psychology of freedom and slavery. It's literally haunting (days after finishing it, I still think about all the terrible poetry of the Hoot/Sam relationship) and hypnotic. I'm honored to have gotten an early look at it."

—Glen David Gold

"Carol Emshwiller's *The Mount* is a wicked book. Like Harlan Ellison's darkest visions, Emshwiller writes in a voice that reminds us of the golden season when speculative fiction was daring and unsettling. Dystopian, weird, comedic as if the Marquis de Sade had joined Monty Python, and ultimately scary, *The Mount* takes us deep into another reality. Our world suddenly seems wrought with terrible ironies and a severe kind of beauty. When we are the mounts, who—or what—is riding us?

—Luis Alberto Urrea

"We are all Mounts and so should read this book like an instruction manual that could help save our lives. That it is also a beautiful funny novel is the usual bonus you get by reading Carol Emshwiller. She always writes them that way."

—Kim Stanley Robinson

"This novel is like a tesseract, I started it and thought, ah, I see what she's doing. But then the dimensions unfolded and somehow it ended up being about so much more."

—Maureen F. McHugh

"*The Mount* is so extraordinary as to be unpraiseable by a mortal such as I. I had to keep putting it down because it was so disturbing then picking it up because it was so amazing. A postmodernist would call it The Eros of Hegemony, but I'm no postmodernist. Nearly every sentence is simultaneously hilarious, prophetic, and disturbing. This person needs to be really, really famous."

—Paul Ingram, Prairie Lights Bookstore

"Brilliantly conceived and painfully acute in its delineation of the complex relationships between masters and slaves, pets and owners, the served and the serving, this poetic, funny and above all humane novel deserves to be read and cherished as a fundamental fable for our material-minded times."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Adult/High School - This veteran science-fiction writer is known for original plots and characters, and her latest novel does not disappoint, offering an extraordinary, utterly alien, and thoroughly convincing culture set in the not-too-distant future. Emshwiller brings readers immediately into the action, gradually revealing the takeover of Earth by the Hoots, otherworldly beings with superior intelligence and technology. Humans have become the Hoots' "mounts," and, in the case of the superior Seattle bloodline, valuable racing stock. Most mounts are well off, as the Hoots constantly remind them, and treated kindly by affectionate owners who use punishment poles as rarely as possible. No one agrees more than principal narrator Charley, a privileged young Seattle whose rider-in-training will someday rule the world. The adolescent mount's dream is of bringing honor to his beloved Little Master by becoming a great champion like Beauty, his sire, whose portrait decorates many Hoot walls. When Charley learns that his father now leads the renegade bands called Wilds, he and Little Master flee. This complex and compelling blend of tantalizing themes offers numerous possibilities for speculation and discussion, whether among friends or in the classroom."

—*School Library Journal*

"Emshwiller's prose is beautiful"

—Laura Miller, *Salon*

"*The Mount* is a brilliant book. But be warned: It takes root in the mind and unleashes aftershocks at inopportune moments."

—*The Women's Review of Books*

"Carol Emshwiller has been writing fantasy, speculative and science fiction for many years; she has a dedicated cult following and has been an influence on a number of today's top writers.... it is very easy to fall into the rhythm of Emshwiller's poetic and smooth sentences."

—*Review of Contemporary Fiction*

"Emshwiller's themes—the allure of submission, the temptations of complicity, the perverse nature of compassion—are not usual fare in novels of resistance and revolt, and her strikingly imaginative novel continues to surpass our expectations to the very last page."

—*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"Both fantastical and unnerving in its familiarity. And like her work in romance and westerns, its genre-twisting plot resists easy classification."

—*The Village Voice*

"Emshwiller uses a deceptively simple narrative voice that gives *The Mount* the style of a young-adult novel. But there's much going on beneath the surface of this narrative, including oblique flashes of humor and artfully articulated moments of psychological insight. The Mount emerges as one of the season's unexpected small pleasures."

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

"A memorable alien-invasion scenario, a wild adventure, and a reflection on the dynamics of freedom and slavery."

—*Booklist*

"A brilliant piece of work."

—*Bookslut*

"...a beautifully written allegorical tale full of hope that even the most unenlightened souls can shrug off the bonds of internalized oppression and finally see the light."

—*BookPage*

"A fable/fantasy/cautionary tale along the lines of, say, *Animal Farm*. It's the story of Charlie, a preadolescent human who's being used as a horse by shoulder-riding alien invaders known as Hoots. Charlie wants nothing more than to become a great Mount, a loyal slave and servant, until his father, a renegade Mount who has fled from the Hoots and now lives in the mountains, comes to take him away. Like so much of Emshwiller's work, *The Mount* asks difficult questions—in this case, What is freedom? The issue is particularly appropriate at a time when "freedom" in America is increasingly defined as "security"—freedom from uncertainty, freedom from fear, freedom from want. All of which is, in the end, not really freedom at all."—*Time Out New York*

"In a recent interview with *Science Fiction Weekly*, Ursula Le Guin called Emshwiller "the most unappreciated great writer we've got." *The Mount* proves Le Guin right.... If Emshwiller is not already on your top bookshelf, *The Mount* will put her there."

—*Rambles*

Carol Emshwiller's stories have appeared in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Century*, *Scifiction*, *Lady Churchill's Rosebud Wristlet*, *TriQuarterly*, *Transatlantic Review*, *New Directions*, *Orbit*, *Epoch*, *The Voice Literary Supplement*, *Omni*, *Crank!*, *Confrontation*, *Trampoline*, *McSweeney's Mammoth Treasury of Thrilling Tales*, and many other anthologies and magazines.

Carol is a MacDowell Colony Fellow and has been awarded an NEA grant, a New York State Creative Artists Public Service grant, a New York State

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