

# Fantasy exposes human aberrations

‘Constellations of Scars’ is set in Seaside

A family-owned museum of human oddities in Seaside is the setting for an inventive new adult fantasy novel titled “Constellations of Scars.”

Clatsop County-based author Melissa Eskue Ousley is fluent in the tourist-oriented beach town vibe. She writes convincingly of the potential of this offbeat museum endeavor.

But the story begins in Roseburg, where for years — ever since she turned 12 and began extruding a monthly crop of beautiful pearls from her back — protagonist Amelia Weaver has been kept

## This week’s book

‘Constellations of Scars’ by Melinda Eskue Ousley  
Midnight Tide Publishing — 258 pages — \$15.99

**NEAR THE CONCLUSION, THE AUTHOR MAKES A VALUABLE POINT ABOUT GROWING UP WITH ADVERSITY VERSUS GROWING UP IN ENTITLEMENT — A BONUS PEARL OF WISDOM IN A TRULY RIVETING STORY.**

housebound by her mother. The pearl-letting process is bloody and deeply painful. Amelia’s back is deeply scarred.

Amelia’s mother originally cloistered her daughter in order to protect her from being kidnapped by fortune hunters who might want to exploit her condition. But over the years, as she has come to rely on her daughter’s pearls for income, she has become the exploiter.

Amelia, now 21 years old, chafes against being held in captivity. She wants to get out and experience the world, so she plots her escape, secreting away a pearl or two every month when she’s able to do so without her mother noticing.

When she has collected enough of a stash, Amelia runs away to Portland where she hopes to sell the pearls and begin living life on her own terms.

But Portland’s established jewelers are a bit skeptical of a pearl broker so young and naïve. Amelia finds herself thrust into street life, searching for refuge in shelters and cheap motels — until an encounter one day with a customer in a jewelry store leads to an enticing offer.

Peter Fortunato is working with his dad to open a sort of science museum/tourist attraction in Seaside. While he has no idea as to how Amelia procures her pearls, he’d like her to become his pearl supplier because their museum has worked up a mermaid-themed game of chance that offers pearls as prizes for a lucky few.

He invites her to come to the coast to check out their enterprise. When she gets to Seaside, Amelia finds a welcoming tribe among the folks who will be employed at the museum as exhibits. In another era they would have been called freaks — but here, the emphasis will be on the reality of human genetic abnormalities and, as Peter’s dad puts it, “To showcase our humanity, in all its wondrous forms.”

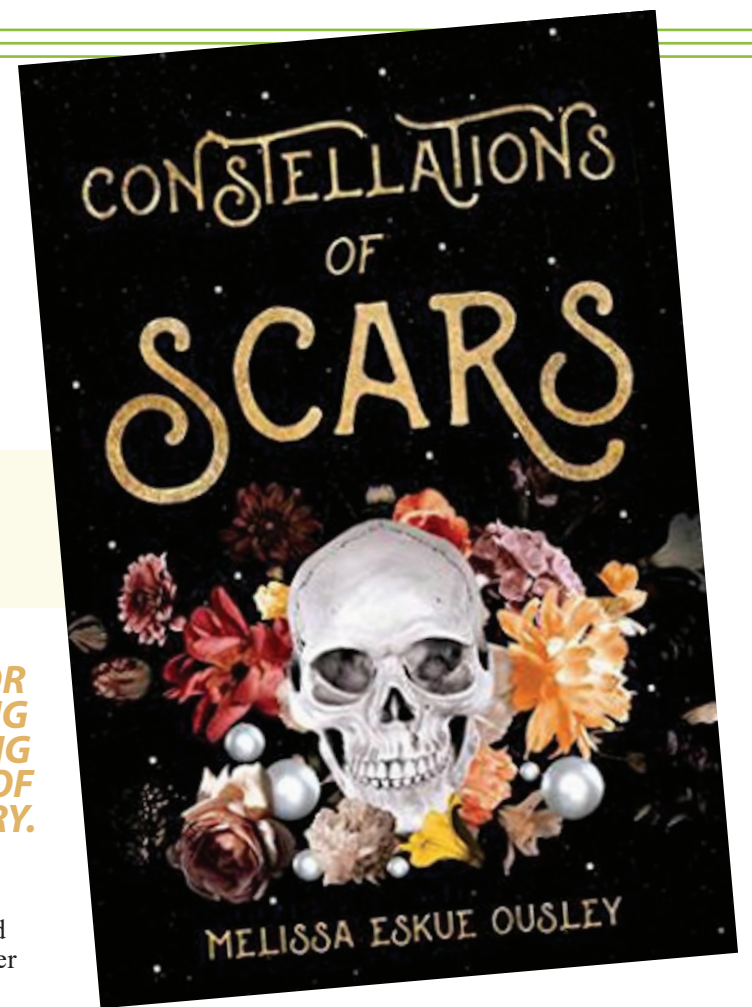
Without revealing her own reality, Amelia begins to think this is a place where she can feel truly at home.

But Amelia is not the only one to harbor secrets. Some troubling revelations about other people surface after she has committed to living there.

“Constellations of Scars” takes a darker turn, forcing Amelia to draw on strengths she didn’t know she had.

Near the conclusion, the author makes a valuable point about growing up with adversity versus growing up in entitlement — a bonus pearl of wisdom in a truly riveting story.

*The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at [barbaralmcm@gmail.com](mailto:barbaralmcm@gmail.com).*



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