



Descent Chap Book published by Omnidawn fall 2025

Judges Citation

Arria Deepwater's story *Descent* begins and ends with the body. Deepwater's gift for transmuting sensation into words is present on every page, a portal into the experience of a unique being. Deepwater upends a familiar fish-out-of-water sci-fi trope with every twist of the plot, giving *Descent's* protagonist a bright childhood with a loving mother and an adult life that works well—or well enough.

Throughout the story, with delicate and precise language and a vivid sense of place, Deepwater explores the mentality of the colonizer, the meaning of wildness, and the perspective of the non-human living beings in our world. Aria Deepwater is a talent to watch for. I'm looking forward to reading their future work.

—Michelle Ruiz Keil, judge's citation for Omnidawn's Fabulist Fiction Chapbook Contest and author of *Summer in the City of Roses*

Additional Praise

Descent is absolutely captivating. Within the first few lines of the story, you will be swirled into a world of rich imagery and intrigue. Once you start reading it, you won't be able to stop with its rich, luscious images that illuminate the senses. As we witness Sona's journey, we are drawn into a world that seems so strange as she seeks to find her own belonging. The story tackles many themes from being accepted for exactly who we are, to the harshness of society when we are different, to how our rights are violated in the name of science. It's a tale of exploration and finding our truth amongst the injustice—very in tune with what is happening in the world right now.

—Cindy Ashton, award winning TV Host, Singer, Actor, creator of "Liberated" and founder of Brave Voices Rising

Rich and entrancing, *Descent* peels back the layers of growing up "other"—disabled, neurodiverse, marginalized in any way—and lays them bare on a riverbank. *Descent* entwines lush and unflinching storytelling to create a deeply compelling narrative that grips you to the very end.

—Rebecca Burke, editor of *In Between Spaces: An Anthology of Disabled Writers*

In gloriously rich and immersive prose, Deepwater tells the story of Sona, whose "abnormal" body casts her into a life of struggle—and a life of gifts. This confronting tale will have you rooting for its warm and complex protagonist while also reflecting on broader themes of bodily autonomy, disability justice, grief, eco-liberation, and the many routes to resistance and survival. All at once heartwarming and heartbreaking, enraging and hopeful, *Descent* is transcendent.

—Raechel Anne Jolie, author of *Rust Belt Femme*

Arria Deepwater's *Descent* brings the beautiful and strange alive in language as fluid and sparkling as the water that courses through these pages. A tale that is both pilgrimage and revelation, filled with horror and also renewal, Sona's journey is one that invites us to re-imagine what it means to belong to a body—and from there, to belong to the world.

—Amanda Leduc, author of *The Centaur's Wife* and *Disfigured: On Fairy Tales, Disability, and Making Space*

Lyrical, earthy, somatic, even allegorical, *Descent* shines a relentless light on the ways we objectify others, the illusions we harbour of separateness (even from the natural world), and the irrevocable harm we may do as a result. It left me yearning to immerse myself, along with the protagonist, in the earthly, loving, all-enveloping source of our being. An immensely evocative and provocative read, and an ode to mud that is anything but murky.

—Brenda Missen, author of the literary thriller *Tell Anna She's Safe* and the memoir *Tumblehome: One Woman's Canoeing Adventures in the Divine Near Wilderness*

With *Descent*, Deepwater strikes again by creating enduring imagery that rolls along effortlessly, often in just one sentence. A seasoned writer's prose that captures your reader's heart from the first paragraph. *Descent* is well-plotted with developed characters to love and others to revile in a speculative world that is very relatable and accessible. And like any good tale dropping breadcrumbs, Deepwater pulls the reader in on an irresistible ride to the fantastical end. Well done!

—Lorrie Potvin, author of *Horses in the Sand*, *First Gear: A Motorcycle Memoir* and winner of Sisters in Crime 2024 PRIDE Award for emerging 2SLGBTQIA+ writers.

* *image designed for Descent by Teagan Berard*