



Blowin' It

Winfred Huskey

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Antihero Billy's character is revealed through his interactions with money and women in this cynical tale of self-discovery.

Blowin' It, the debut novel by Winfred Huskey, is a story of luck, usually good and expressly undeserved, blown on bad choices and self-absorbed misery. The paths of two protagonists cross via a mundane work-related bureaucracy; one of whose optimistic outlook and willing social-climbing life is cut short by mishap, setting the other's on a strange course of avoidance, bizarre adventure, and self-discovery.

Huskey's writing owes much to the beat and punk generations; at twenty-three, principal character Billy George is overeducated and understimulated, recognizing the free-spiritedness of others in contrast to his own aim of becoming more "serious-minded." While on an errand-turned-adventure, Billy develops a new sense of himself through encounters with characters Huskey writes vividly, if simply.

Billy doesn't stay still long enough to develop relationships with the majority of the book's vibrant cast, despite the ongoing narrative pull of the possibility that he will reunite with ex-lover Lucy. Huskey's descriptions of Billy's lustier moments reveal a certain sexual insecurity, marked by his character's possessiveness and fairly one-dimensional view of women. Encounters with female characters are underlined with unflattering portraiture and the impression that Billy must take on exaggerated personae to relate to them. As in many narratives in which a young, white, middle-class male features as the lens, the portrayal of characters unlike Billy exposes his social biases and adherence to stereotypes.

Although his prose may border on the purple ("The barista had on clothes like a jawbreaker's layers of colorful sugar"), Huskey does well in allowing Billy's conversation with various foils to reveal his character's evolving self-conceptualization. Billy's is an antihero's journey, and like other writing in the subgenre, Huskey's structure, pacing, and grammar are rough and associative—the emergent narrative voice is most at home telling stories over more than a few drinks at the local bar.

In *Blowin' It*, the vicious meaninglessness of wealth and poverty in America propels revelations of life's everyday absurdities. When he has more than he needs, Billy acknowledges his lingering unhappiness and burns through his resources, discovering a preference for the situations and the scrapes he experiences while clutching at scraps: "Billy suddenly saw how much limoncello he'd made from the sour citrus life had handed him of late." This is a book for those who don't believe in tomorrow, but will keep drinking and swapping tales until sunrise.

PATTY COMEAU (Fall 2014)

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