

Golden Gate Jumper Survivors Society

Ross Wilcox

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Ross Wilcox's offbeat, engaging short story collection, *Golden Gate Jumper Survivors Society*, cloaks the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Strange circumstances abound. In the title story, suicide survivors practice their bridge jumping skills each week at a local pool until their support group is turned into a yoga class after a leadership coup. In "Ransom," a seventh grader announces to his new classmates that his parents are professional kidnappers; when a kidnapping occurs exactly as he's described, it seems that half the town is in on the plot. "Year of Our Lawn" describes a community where families compete to create more and more elaborate taxidermy dioramas in their front yards.

Wilcox's well-drawn characters engage in crisp, natural dialogues. In "Of Small Account," after a woman creates a little boy with a 3D printer, her husband wonders whether it's a good idea: "I mostly meant that we couldn't afford to have a kid, not if we hoped to pay off the house." In "Oliver Weston GBV," an intriguing but delusional young man who dresses in a purple wizard costume believes that his life is being taped for a reality television show: "it does get tiring. Like when I'm in line to get a sandwich or a Twinkie and the cameras are rolling and everyone's acting like they're not on TV."

The book's many surreal elements are grounded in authentic, sometimes heartbreaking, details. In "Backwater," a teenage girl whose parents are divorcing identifies with a classmate who tells the story, over and over, of how he nearly drowned: "with each retelling, I found myself pulled under, my own breath growing short as Riley reached the point in the story where he blacked out."

Throughout the compelling, unexpected, and poignant stories of *Golden Gate Jumper Survivors Society*, the absurd is masked by the everyday.

KRISTEN RABE (July / August 2020)

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