

Little Bird

Tiffany Meuret

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In Tiffany Meuret's contemporary fantasy novel *Little Bird*, a divorced woman encounters magic beyond her comprehension, shaking up her messy life and forcing her to assess her priorities, as well as the meanings of life and death.

Josie works from home. Her only companion is her chihuahua, Po. Mourning her dead father and estranged from her mother, Josie drinks herself to sleep every night and wakes hungover every morning to emails full of client demands. She has her groceries delivered so that she does not need to interact with anyone. Then an inquisitive new neighbor, Sue, threatens to shatter Josie's beloved solitude. Between Josie's escalating drinking habits and Sue's irritating presence, Josie begins to question the path her life has taken.

Next, a talking skeleton whom Josie dubs Skelly shows up in Josie's yard, surrounded by undulating vines that seem to respond to Josie's thoughts. Mysterious earthquakes follow—ones that impact the entire neighborhood, not just Josie. Prodded by Skelly and Sue's attentions, Josie confronts her choices and delves into her past, deciding whether joining Skelly's otherworldly family holds more appeal than limping along in her broken and isolated life on Earth.

The tone, at times humorous, captures the absurdity of Josie's situation: her imperfect life is punctuated by the arrival of impossibilities. Josie's grief threatens to swallow her, while her obligation to feed her demanding dog keeps her moving. The banality of daily life shines through in Meuret's prose, even as wonder and terror beckon from Josie's front porch.

Blending the mundane with the fantastical, *Little Bird* flirts with magical realism, depicting the tension between a woman's commitment to maintaining her bubble and the demands of a force that's larger than life.

JEANA JORGENSEN (May / June 2022)

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