Something Wonderful

Jo Lloyd
Tin House (Aug 24, 2021)
Hardcover $24.95 (232pp)
978-1-951142-72-8

The short stories collected in Jo Lloyd's *Something Wonderful* are luminous, startling, and diverse. In them, characters search for meaning, value, and truth, often describing their circumstances with wry bluntness.

In "Work," a woman takes a job at a restaurant, believing she'll be "making frilly garnishes out of lemons," but ends up mopping and fetching, which she compares to "going under with the *Titanic*, only hot." She befriends the sous chef, a recovering addict, who explains, "work is like dope… Sometimes it makes you high, and sometimes it makes you sick. But mostly it just softens the edges."

The settings span eras and regions. An arrogant mine owner surveys his holdings in a "barbarous" territory and dreams of plundering the land, while his stoic horse endures his jabs and skids down a slope faced with "loose, wet scree," dreaming of the mush that a stable boy fed her years ago. Residents of an obscure Welsh village speculate about an invisible, aristocratic family that only an eccentric recluse can see. Two elderly women hunt for rare butterflies, straining in the rugged, pre-war Balkans. After one has a debilitating stroke, the other notes with poignancy, "It would be kinder if they could go through one more metamorphosis before winter. If all that pearl and iridescence could be melted down and reshaped." A character in another story observes that she often dwells on what's insignificant and ephemeral, but is jolted out of her thoughts "by a bird flying by or a face in the street or the light reaching through the clouds"; she realizes that she "hadn't even been paying proper attention while it was there."

Fortunately, Lloyd does pay proper attention, and the stories of *Something Wonderful* capture telling details in a unique, powerful voice.

KRISTEN RABE (September / October 2021)

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