

Tacky Goblin

T. Sean Steele

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T. Sean Steele's *Tacky Goblin* is a clever, loopy novella that relates the journal entries of an unnamed twentysomething central character. He drifts through ennui-laden days in his parents' home in Chicago, surviving demonic possession that's due to a mouth-shaped ceiling mold stain that swallows up a parasitic goblin.

Things get even more surreal when the hero moves to Los Angeles to share an apartment with his sister, Kim. Kim may or not be a serial killer; the dog the narrator cares for, Muggins, is possibly also an infant named Barb; and the upstairs neighbor that blasts ambient noise podcasts walks around with a hole where his abdominal organs should be.

As anyone who has survived the gauntlet of independent adulthood knows, the transition is emotionally hard and unsettling, and as full of angst, bizarre life events, and weirdo relatives and love interests as this frothy little fantasy. The absurd plot and Steele's deadpan humor combine to make the book a delightful send-up of classic coming-of-age fiction.

Kim gets the funniest lines. When the narrator complains that she never flushes the toilet, she informs him that there's a drought going on, which he should have read about in her email. When he demurs about picking up her car from the repair shop because he has no license, she retorts: "A driver's license is one of those things people say you need but really you don't. Like bedsheets, or protein." Even when she and other characters say the most ridiculous things, the dialogue seems natural and unforced, a trick that Steele pulls off throughout the book.

Tacky Goblin is a perfect escapist read for anyone who needs a break from reality's daily grind. It's a petite fantasy with a huge scoop of absurdist humor that will leave readers hungering for more of Steele's outsized interpretation of life.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (July/August 2018)

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