

The High-Rise Diver

Julia von Lucadou

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A woman stands on a platform, suspended between two high-rise buildings. Then she is falling, somersaulting, creating beautiful sharp lines with her body. At the last possible moment, her arms open. She shoots into the sky, carried aloft by the prevailing winds. These are the first images in Julia von Lucadou's cerebral dystopian novel *The High-Rise Diver*.

Hitomi is a psychological business analyst. Her assignment is to observe Riva, a high-rise diver and media darling. Riva has refused to attend training sessions, follow her nutrition plan, or even speak more than a few sentences a day, risking fines for breach of contract. Hitomi's sole job is to diagnose and treat Riva so that she may return to her professional obligations. Under pressure to provide answers that will look good for investors, Hitomi delves into her subject.

Riva no longer has any misconceptions about her life; she's become able to ignore the risks of noncompliance with her contract. Hitomi, in contrast, is thriving. She motivates herself with a list of failures and logs her daily physical and mental states. But watching Riva, and working to discover how her mental state turned without warning, takes a toll on Hitomi, who begins to understand that they are both being manipulated from all sides, and that their mentors only see their value if they perform and return results.

Piercing prose propels the story forward, making it clear that everything is not as it seems. There is an underlying, sinister current to the text as the eye is drawn to the trademark symbol next to common phrases; the realization sets in that the fitness tracker that Hitomi wears is monitored by her superiors.

The High-Rise Diver is a dystopian interrogation and critique of capitalism, whose concern for the health and well-being of people is revealed to be a punishing masquerade.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (March / April 2021)

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