

The Last List of Miss Judith Kratt

Andrea Bobotis

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In Andrea Bobotis's *The Last List of Miss Judith Kratt*, Judith is the keeper “not just of the Kratt family's valuables but of its stories, too.” The murder of her brother, Quincy, is one story that the family never quite faced.

At seventy-five, Judith reflects on Quincy's death sixty years ago and how it changed her town and her siblings. In fact, her sister, Rosemarie, still believes that Judith killed Quincy. Without heirs, Judith is determined to complete an inventory of her possessions. In the process, she discovers her own orientation to a lifetime's worth of secrets.

Judith was raised with the model of an abusive patriarch who embodied the full power of a cultural system that upheld his rights at the expense of others'. Possession holds tremendous power over her, and her relationship to objects far exceeds her ability to relate to people. Kept for their perceived value as much as for unexpressed emotions, the items on Judith's list helped her transform her chaotic past into a collection of manageable artifacts over which she holds dominion.

Brutalized in her own way, Judith is a contradiction, and her naivety and pain are still predicated on power structures. She knows, yet is reluctant to acknowledge, what a luxury it is “to be able to write or speak in the way you want.” As she works through her list, some things shift, but her victimhood doesn't nullify her ability to victimize others.

The Last List of Miss Judith Kratt wrestles with the dividends yielded by a hierarchical ordering of the world. In her final accounting, memories and history aren't things that can be given away; they are inextricably bound up in each other, and they become what binds so many people in place.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (July/August 2019)

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