FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

The Ordinary Sublime
Patricia Waters
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These poems contain that feeling of inevitability only possible in retrospect. The poet is in control as she reflects on a failed marriage and its accoutrements; for example, when she asks in "Attar": "What can one do, / when one has survived love?" This is the central question of her collection, which hinges not on finding the answer but in seeking the answer honestly. As the title suggests, the result is a work comforting in its exploration of life's bumps that, despite being all too familiar, still pack a punch.

The real-life stories that Waters tells are entwined in myth. The first poem in the collection, "Proverbs," asks readers to "drown in such a bold story," and it is unclear whether the story is of Icarus or of a woman with mismatched dining-room chairs. Myths and fairytales nestle among plenty of the normal—locals stopping for coffee, teenagers stopping for Sonic limeades, truckers stopping for meth.

The gesture suggests that the book's title is doing more work than it appears to be doing at first glance. The couplings of dragons and datebooks or spells and radios suggest that there is something sublime in the ordinary and, moreover, that there is something ordinary in the sublime. Although Waters never flaunts her discovery, this realization is something like an antidote to heartache, an answer to what one does after surviving love. Rapunzel gets out the scissors. Waters gets out her pen.

She was the 2003—2004 writer-in-residence at the University of Tennessee libraries. This honor followed a notable academic career in Tennessee, including a Bachelor's degree from the University of Memphis, a Master's and Doctorate from the University of Tennessee, and a teaching appointment at Tennessee Wesleyan College. Her poems, however, are not "academic" in the sense of being too smart for their own good. In fact, they are full of confessions that would be made not to a stranger, but to an intimate friend, someone who most likely already knows.

In "La Vie Quotidienne," the speaker explains what it is like to cook for only one: "a tray, television, / lost conversations in the head, / vodka goes with anything." And what is

sublime about this scene? The honesty. While a person can prepare to cook for twenty without any logistical concerns, eating alone takes alcohol and practice. This collection is not a Hollywood version of survival, ending with new love and an upbeat song; it is a realistic look at survival and consequently more satisfying and encouraging than anything sugarcoated.

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