



Wonders of the West

Kate Braverman

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Since the appearance of *Lithium for Medea*, her astonishing 1979 debut novel, Kate Braverman has demonstrated an absolutely original and uncompromising understanding of the outsiders of Los Angeles. Her short story collection, *Squandering the Blue*, was hailed by the *Chicago Tribune* as "one of the most remarkable collections you will ever read." The *Los Angeles Times* has called her a "visionary" and *Newsday* has praised her writing as "beautiful and poetic...hard to resist." Now, in *Wonders of the West*, Braverman surpasses all previous expectations with a novel about internal exile and the dark side of the American dream. It is the early 1960s and the world is on the verge of monumental change. Jordan Lerner is a teenager adrift in a land of brutally unconscious adults, struggling for breath in a place that is slowly losing air. Jordan's mother has dared to leave her husband and tradition for the idea of a second chance in California. She has risked crossing the country in a broken-down car, pawning jewelry like parts of herself to raise money for the road. Jordan half expects that she will be next. State by state, mother and daughter find themselves sleeping on the ground, impoverished, engaged in a journey that is more than metaphoric, that is leaving a stain on their souls. Through the arid, blistering heat and the cold, blue dark of the night they are initiated into an America that has nothing to do with postcards. It is a nation of hallucinatory, frightening highway motels and vegetable stands, of deserts and lies and the growing realization that they have left nothing to arrive at something less than that. What they discover is a tawdry Dust Bowl outpost, a region of poverty on the Pacific where families disintegrate beneath the sullen palms and sunsets sordid as a garish bruise. It is here that Jordan Lerner struggles to invent herself and finds the courage to recognize and seize her destiny.

Wonders of the West Details

Date : Published January 20th 1993 by Fawcett

ISBN : 9780449906569

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Format : Hardcover 280 pages

Genre : Fiction, Womens

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