



Scavengers

Becky Hagenston

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A woman obsessed with reality TV encounters a sorority girl who has embarked on a very personal scavenger hunt. A man unexpectedly discovers that his father—a seemingly rational man—believes, seriously, in lake monsters. A woman whose husband has just survived a near-fatal accident flees to St. Petersburg, Russia, to wander through museums and palaces and simply try to forget. Hansel (yes, *that* Hansel), all grown up, tries to be a good father. A young girl begins to suspect that the séances being held in her basement just might not be as harmless as they seem.

These are the people and situations—where the familiar and bizarre intermix—that animate Becky Hagenston's stories in *Scavengers*. From Mississippi to Arizona to Russia, characters find themselves faced with a choice: make sense of the past, or run from it. But Hagenston reminds us that even running can never be pure—so which parts of your past do you decide to hold on to? A brilliant collection from a master of short fiction, *Scavengers* is surprising, strange, and moving by turns—and wholly unforgettable.

Scavengers Details

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Author : Becky Hagenston

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From Reader Review Scavengers for online ebook

Mari LivTollefsonCarlson says

The estranged characters in Becky Hagenston's latest collection of short stories may not make the right choices as they traverse moments of change, but they endear themselves to us in their bumbling. The stories fall into three major categories: stories starring kids, couples (often at odds about whether or not to have kids), and adult children dealing with aging parents. Despite the paucity of happy endings, understated forgiveness and even some magic redeem these woeful tales.

"Arctic Circus," "Secrets of Old-time Science Experiments," "Ivy Green" and "Cool" are stories featuring kids struggling to gain the attention of preoccupied adults. They don't always get it, but as readers, Becky Hagenston invites us in to give it. We witness the secret antics of a teenage daughter escaping her family's Thanksgiving dinner with her boyfriend; she wishes someone would come looking for her. When another teen's father leaves her birthday presents outside her bedroom door, she thanks him just as silently. We, not the father, know how much the present mean to her. Yet another teenage girl pretends, ironically, to be Helen Keller to make her point as loud and as clear as possible that she wants her parents to get on with their divorce. Sisters argue whether or not to trust their "Aunt Julep," who treats them as doormen for her seances. The trusting sister disappears with the "aunt," leaving her big sister alone in the world, abandoned by parents out touring as a folk duo. The pleasure in these stories is not in reconciliation between adult and child, but in getting to know these kids as they act out to be noticed.

Couples take up the bulk of the stories: "The Afterlife," "Scavengers," "Puppet Town," the "Good Listener," "Crumbs," and "Let Yourself Go." Delores, in "Scavengers," the title story, interrupts Margaret while she makes audition tapes for reality shows. Margaret's mother asks her, "who needs a reality show... real life is real enough." Little does mom know, Margaret has already won a part in Delores' own plot to steal Margaret's unborn child from her. Margaret escapes not only Delores but the husband who doesn't want their child nearly as much as she does. Hagenston infuses "reality" with fantastical elements like Delores, a witch who has cursed Margaret's reality-loving mother. "I curse your baby girl, and I will take her firstborn as my own." The result is a reality cracked open, leaving readers eager for every possibility Hagenston dishes up. Old age also opens characters to the unexpected, in "The Lake" and "Hilda." A surly old father requests his son bring him a gun, presumably to kill a bear menacing his property, but, in fact, he uses to shoot at a lake "monster." The son leaves his dad's place convinced he's seen it, too, despite his desire to write his dad off. Their shared sighting is about as close as they get. Hilda kisses a pushy antique salesman despite her better judgement, warning him "I killed a bear once,... and presses her lips to the sides of his face, pressing hard until she's certain that when she steps back there will be something to see." With that palpable impression, the collection of stories ends. Hagenston's characters have flowered before our eyes in detailed wonder, like night lilies we miss even before they're gone.

Marian says

Some of these stories are quite good - typically those that depart from realism. With the more realist pieces, I longed for a fresher approach. Full review at the Minneapolis Star Tribune:

<http://www.startribune.com/review-sca...>

