



The Kind of Things Saints Do (Iowa Short Fiction Award)

Laura Valeri

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From the Anglo-American woman who makes a spectacle of herself trying to be Cuban in Miami to the estranged son leading his father on a hostile hike in New Mexico, Valeri's characters carry a heavy load of desire and anger. Proud, loud, and hungry for whatever comes next, each person desperately searches for an understanding that lessens his or her burden. The saints here are pure only in their anger, desperation, and desire to be loved, holy only in their quest to keep going.

These stories grow through subtle shifts—the bad becomes not so bad, the worst livable. It is the saintly moments of unexpected understanding that shape the collection: one gigolo's lover picks up another at a bus stop and they agree on his worthlessness, the love-worn man reminds the newly divorced woman of her physical power, the estranged son shelters his father from an unexpected storm.

Valeri navigates the reader through the bones and scars of those who ache with wanting something else and become a little older and a little wiser for it. *The Kind of Things Saints Do* is a collection of human imperfections and missed connections that grows into a kaleidoscope of aspiration and hope.

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