



by Franziska Hauser
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Fiction

At the End of Small Things

Am Ende der Kleinigkeiten

review

Franziska Hauser's fourth novel, 'At the End of Small Things', is a searing first-person account of a woman's struggle to build a life from the wreckage of a radical upbringing.

Set against the backdrop of post-unification Germany, the story follows Irma, who grows up in an alternative rural commune founded in the wake of '*die Wende*', the 'turnaround' of reunification. While intended as a utopia of freedom and independence from bourgeois norms, for Irma the commune is a place of emotional instability and constant vigilance, dominated by a charismatic, artistic mother whose love is strictly conditional and often cruel.

Aged fifteen, Irma eventually escapes the commune for the structured world of the city theatre. It is here that she encounters Blanda, a celebrated actress whose commanding presence becomes a silent counter-image to her mother. In the theatre, Irma learns to view emotion not as a destructive force to be feared, but as 'material' to be harnessed. This transition from a world of ideological formlessness to one of artistic discipline characterises her development.

One of the novel's most striking sequences occurs when Blanda is hospitalised following a miscarriage. Stripped of stage lights and applause, the legendary actress is rendered physically vulnerable and frightened. Irma, stepping into her habitual role of the quiet, practical caregiver, finds herself in a brief, unglamorous interval of intimacy.

However, Blanda's subsequent emotional withdrawal once she has recovered highlights the recurring pattern of Irma's life: the offering of deep care that is rarely reciprocated.

Beyond its psychological depth, the novel serves as a powerful allegory for German reunification. Hauser, whose previous work was nominated for the German Book Prize, expertly captures the psychological mood, rather than just the physical or economic transition of the former East. Irma's attempt to invent a nurturing model for her own son, Kolya, without having had one herself, resonates as a broader metaphor for a society trying to forge a new identity from a broken past. 'At the End of Small Things' is a sophisticated, demanding, and rewarding work that will appeal to readers of high-end literary fiction interested in European history and the resilience of the self.

Find out more:

<https://www.fva.de/Buecher/Fruehjahr-2026/Am-Ende-der-Kleinigkeit-en.html>

press quotes

This is a book about violence and motherhood, devotion and humiliation. Franziska Hauser gently places a girl growing into a woman among it all – and allows me to grow and heal with Irma. I love this Irma. I love this book!

Maren Wurster

A survival book in every sense – a sackful of the worst experiences imaginable, and the most beautiful ones one would never want to miss.

Gert Loschütz

about the author



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Franziska Hauser was born in Berlin-Pankow in 1975. She studied at the Weißensee Academy of Art and Design and at Ostkreuz School of Photography. Her debut novel Sommerdreieck ('Summer Triangle') was followed by Die Gewitterschwimmerin ('The Thunderstorm Swimmer', 2018), which was shortlisted for the German Book Prize. After Die Glasschwestern ('The Glass Sisters') and Keine von ihnen ('None of Them'), she co-edited the widely acclaimed anthology Ost*West*frau* (FVA, Spring 2025) together with Maren Wurster. Franziska Hauser has two children and lives partly in Berlin.

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