



by Maren Wurster
Piper Verlag
January 2025 / 256pp
Fiction

This Is Not The Place

Hier bleiben können wir auch nicht

review

Set in a dystopian society called the Tech Republic, Maren Wurster's three-part novel charts the lives of Gesa and her daughter Marie. Since the death of her husband, Gesa has been keen to leave the totalitarian-style, elite republic where citizens are routinely chipped and monitored. Despite her opposition leading to the docking of privileges – she is not allowed to attend public events or even shop at a supermarket – she rejects the system to start a new life with Marie in a dilapidated rural house. Soon, however, Gesa's body starts to show signs of poisoning, which she believes might be caused by toxic substances in the house. Again, she looks for a new place to settle with her young daughter and finds a nearby alternative in the form of a commune on a disused farm.

At first, the two experience a sense of community and emotional support in the group. However, Gesa's financial situation is too precarious to establish a life there. Her symptoms persist, and it quickly becomes clear that they stem from her psychological state. Throughout the book, flashbacks gradually reveal that Gesa's pain and anger are the result of a troubled childhood, marked by emotional neglect from her mother. There are subtle hints that her mother, in turn, may have suffered abuse at the hands of her father. She finds it impossible to embrace the idealistic attitude of those in the commune who believe that everything will work out well in the end. Mother and daughter return to their old house.

Leaping forward to Marie’s perspective as a seventeen-year-old, we learn that Gesa has since drowned—or, according to her file, died by suicide, though Marie refuses to accept this version. Despite the apparent bleakness of this ending, the cycle of familial violence has been broken: Marie has inherited her mother’s rebellious spirit and has cut the microchip out of her hand. Now a young woman, she refuses to bend to authority and has found some of the peace and freedom her mother always wanted to provide for her.

Maren Wurster’s changes of perspective, from a first-person narrative to dialogue, and powerful sensory evocation, lend an immediacy to her storytelling and depth to her characters. While the novel does not shy away from tackling big themes such as abuse, urban toxicity and encroaching technology, it manages to deliver uplifting and even humorous moments without slipping into melodrama or sentimentality.

Find out more:

<https://www.piper.de/buecher/hier-bleiben-koennen-wir-auch-nicht-isbn-978-3-8270-1522-8>

about the author



© Christian Schulz

Maren Wurster was born in Filderstadt in 1976, studied Philosophy in Cologne and Creative Writing at the German Institute for Literature Leipzig (DLL). To date, she has published *Das Fell* ('The Fur'), *Papa stirbt, Mama auch* (The Stagger), *Eine beiläufige Entscheidung* ('A Casual Decision') and *Totenwache* ('The Wake'). She lives with her son in the Wendland, Lower Saxony.

Previous works: *Das Fell*, Hanser Berlin, (2017); *Papa stirbt, Mama auch*, Hanser Berlin (2021); *Eine beiläufige Entscheidung*, Hanser Berlin (2022); *Totenwache*, leykam: (2022).

rights information

Piper Verlag (Germany)

Contact: Hinako Yukawa
hinako.yukawa@piper.de

Tel: +49 (0)89 3818-01123

Georgenstrasse 4

80799 Munich

www.piper.de