



by Saskia Winkelmann
verlag die brotsuppe
April 2023 / 196pp
Fiction

Vertigo

Höhenangst

review

Vertigo is a sensational debut about a young woman's spiral out of control, by Swiss nightclub DJ Saskia Winkelmann.

The last term of high school in a small Swiss town brings new beginnings, but a tragic end for the eighteen-year-old protagonist. She lives with her mother, who hardly ever leaves the house. Her refuge is the botanical garden, and she has had no friends since her gerbils died. She is bored, about to graduate from high school, and doesn't know what to do with herself. Then she meets Jo, and things start to happen. The novel is narrated in the first person, and told exclusively from the perspective of its unnamed narrator.

The intense relationship between Jo and the narrator is explored: Jo does not care what others think, and is immune to expectations. She dares to do anything. At an illegal basement club and Jo's family hunting lodge, the protagonist has her first experiences with drugs, electronic music, and sex. A deep friendship develops between the two young women. But then everything goes wrong.

The narrator's father is largely absent, but does provide her with a loft apartment to live in when she moves out of her mother's house. When she moves there, she loses all sense of a daily routine and spirals into freefall.

At the hunting lodge, while the two girls are high on drugs, Jo drowns.

The narrator is taken in by the police for questioning, but as she is cross-examined she feels utterly detached, as if her body is not her own. She refuses to communicate, feeling cut off from the world. She is then taken into psychiatric care, where she works with a psychiatrist, whom she calls 'the Queen', beginning to process what has happened.

This is a book about queerness and the experience of growing up on the periphery of mainstream culture. The narrative does not move forward in a linear way, but flashes back and forth, teasing the reader with slow reveals. There is a growing sense of dread, and the dawning realisation that something is going to go terribly wrong. This is a compulsive, page-turner of a novel, where the reader becomes highly invested in the fate of the characters.

Vertigo is a timeless story of self-discovery and tragic loss bound up with substance abuse and addiction: a coming-of-age narrative with a bitter twist, told with the fresh voice and engaging perspective of a talented new writer.

Find out more:

<http://diebrotsuppe.ch/publikationen/alle-titel/hoehenangst>

about the author



Saskia Winkelmann was born 1990 in Thun and studied Language Arts at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna and Contemporary Arts Practice at the Bern University of the Arts. She writes, hosts, moderates, and DJs under the alias Kia Mann. Her writing has appeared in literary magazines, newspapers, a zine, on stage, and on a record cover. She has a deep belief in the power of collectives and radical honesty, and also in the fact that the only thing that is certain is that everything changes. Höhenangst [Vertigo] is her first novel. She lives in Bern.

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