



by Judith Keller
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Fiction

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translation rights to the book
have sold.

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once an English language
translation is published.

Wild Maneuvers

Wilde Manöver

review

A work of futuristic literary fiction, Judith Keller's *Wilde Manöver* is a tale of female friendship and the transformation of our world. Engaging, imaginative and open to interpretation, it reflects the current conversation on women's rights while also looking to the future on a broader scale. Keller employs an unusual structure and subtle elements of sci-fi to make this a timely and highly original read.

Wilde Manöver is a story nested within a story: the novel's outward structure is a piece of historical research being conducted in 2098. The research in question concerns the summer of 2025 – more specifically, a police interview conducted between an Inspector Lombardi and a criminal suspect, Vera Savakis. After a van is stolen in Zurich and apprehended at the Italian border, where it is found to contain a large amount of cocaine, Vera and her friend Peli stand accused of smuggling drugs. The two women admit to taking the van but claim to know nothing about the drugs. Instead, Vera explains, they used the van to steal furniture and ornaments from gardens.

The police inspector is unconvinced; he has evidence that Peli is actually Alexandra Morgane, a former crane driver with links to a drug-smuggling operation. Cranes are indeed a major feature of Vera's story – she maintains that she and Peli simply go wherever they point – but she continues to proclaim her innocence. As the inspector grows more and more frustrated, Vera's stories become wilder and wilder. A stolen mermaid, fires in the woods, bicycles

arranged in circles on the train tracks, more garden furniture and the assault of a police officer . . . Inspector Lombardi is thoroughly perplexed.

Suddenly, a power cut strikes and Vera disappears from the police station. Three years pass, during which the inspector and Shiva Hirz, an acquaintance of Vera and Peli, try to piece together exactly what happened. This section of the novel is presented as Shiva's notes, in which she focuses on the signs and symbols that the two women scattered around Zurich. Vera's entire narrative seems fantastical and hard even for Shiva to believe, until suddenly, in 2028, all the events she described start coming true . . .

Penned with a deft touch and enormous imagination, *Wilde Manöver* plays with unreliable narrators, plot holes and confusion to keep its readers on their toes. Keller writes vividly about what it is to escape the everyday, about bonds of female friendship and the rapidly changing world we live in. Making a case for fiction being stranger than the truth, this is a bold and extremely readable novel by a standout voice in contemporary Swiss literature.

Find out more:

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press quotes

I have rarely read anything this refreshing, bold and funny.

Saša Stanišić

The lightness with which the author finds language and images for inner truths is astonishing. But these images are never harmless or conciliatory. On the contrary, (...) they have the power to shame us with their analysis of the state of our society.

Insa Wilke, Süddeutsche Zeitung

about the author



Judith Keller was born in Switzerland in 1985, studied creative writing in Leipzig and Biel, and qualified as a German language teacher in Berlin and Bogotá. She has also worked as an editor at the literary journal Edit. She has won honorary awards from the city and canton of Zurich for her story collection *Die Fragwürdigen* (The Questionable Ones, translated by Tess Lewis).

Previous works: *Das ramponierte Vertrauen* [The battered trust], Vexer (2022); *Oder?, Der gesunde Menschenversand* (2021); *Die Fragwürdigen, Der gesunde Menschenversand* (2017); *Wo ist das letzte Haus?*, Matthes & Seitz (2016).

Previously translated into English: *The Questionable Ones*, Seagull Books (2023); *The Last House*, Readux Books (2014).

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