



The Diver

Samsun Knight

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Samsun Knight's novel *The Diver* is a singular mashup of noir fiction, dark comedy, occult thriller, and legal intrigue. The result is sometimes disturbing, sometimes funny, and full of interesting ideas.

In the book's memorable first chapter, a husband and his wife are on a diving trip; they realize too late that they don't have enough oxygen left for both to return to the surface. A ticking clock is set, driving the book's tension. Marta returns to land and her husband doesn't, and the ambiguous nature of the diver's survival puts other events in motion.

Once Marta rises to the surface, the book's perspective switches to Peter. He's a recent college graduate working as a paralegal at a shady law firm that deals in intimidation and blackmail. When a client hires the firm to harass Marta, Peter meets her and tries to warn her. Instead, he becomes fixated on her. She leads him toward creepy occult practices and animal sacrifice.

Meanwhile, Peter's family and career fall apart. Peter's mother, herself a believer in psychics, goes missing, and the suicide of his brother hangs over Peter throughout the story. These and other subplots, however, take a backseat to Marta and her desperate attempts to contact the husband whom she lost on that fateful dive.

The Diver is a dark and quirky story about death, resurrection, and the extreme lengths people will go to in order to find answers. Its plot is busy, but it's supported by strong prose and engaging conversations between its damaged and angry characters. And as strange as Marta and Peter's relationship becomes, there's a twisted logic holding it together, making their cruel choices make sense—at least, from their perspectives.

JEFF FLEISCHER (November / December 2023)

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