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WONDERS OF THE WEST

By Kate Braverman

Ballantine/Fawcett Columbine. 283 pp. \$20.

Examining in a New Jersey museum a plaster cast of a Chinese woman's tiny, bound foot, broken so she can never leave her husband/master, Ruth Lerner suddenly wept. Then she began saving money to buy a red convertible and leave her drab housewife life. Soon, she takes her 10 year-old daughter Jordan and heads west. They detour only to view a tourist attraction called Wonders of the West before eventually reaching Ruth's brother Louie's home in Los Angeles.

Ruth, who has reinvented herself as "Roxanne," went in quest of fame and a sugar daddy but finds only meager jobs and no sugar. The brother she'd believed was thriving is actually a resident in a bleak medical housing project for terminal outpatients. It is from Louie's apartment in 1965 that Jordan, now 17, with a 157 IQ but failing five subjects because her teachers "are trying to give me radiation sickness of the soul," narrates the story and becomes its focus. An anguished rebel with "a sense of destiny and recognition" Jordan refuses to let society mold her. Her classes "would be a bridge to a place I never want to go."

The power of this vibrant novel lies in Braverman's elegiac depiction of how Jordan grows alienated. As she drives west with a mother who no longer wants to be a mother, Jordan finds America's archetypal journey of hope, the voyage into the frontier, a heartbreaking lie. Edging westward, she sees countless faces of women staring forlornly out of windows onto barrenness. Having pawned her possessions before reaching Wonders of the West, Jordan discovers this "attraction" to be relics of hardship and death and broken dreams. Her trek ends beneath a hovering sky that looks "like something that has had its intestines ripped out." It is sunset in Los Angeles. The once rosy frontier has made Jordan's life "a history of divestiture." Los Angeles is "the great American game show in reverse," about what's gone, what you had to leave behind.

Disillusioned yet undefeated, dawning flower child Jordan determines to paint her own frontier and step in. Thus, Braverman does not simply demolish the vestigial American myth of rediscovered Eden. She reshapes it to a more transcendent, if potentially sentimental, paradise within. The urgency of Braverman's vision leads to some repetitiveness, but her lyrical voice and haunting imagery lend almost every page color, invention and often brilliance.

Top 10 Wonders of the West. Experience the hottest, lowest, driest and certainly the most beautiful places in the West. Pinterest. Facebook. Just 90 miles off the coast of Los Angeles, the Channel Islands have 177 miles of coastline with rocky cliffs and beaches. Columbia River. East of Portland, OR, the Columbia River region has one of the highest concentrations of waterfalls in the United States. Yellowstone National Park. The first US national park, Yellowstone has 2.2 million acres of mountain scenery, animals and endless natural beauty. Redwoods National Park. Roughly 300,000 visitors come to Redwoods National Park each year to experience the grandeur of the giant redwoods. Grand Canyon. Get Notified about the latest hits and trends, so that you are always on top of the latest in music when it comes to your friends. Okay, Got it! The Wonders of the West. Home. browse. discover. Radio. Please select the language(s) of the music you listen to. Hindi. English. Punjabi. Telugu. Tamil. Bhojpuri. Day 2: The Wonders of the Grand Canyon. Day 3: Grand Canyon and Lake Powell. Day 4: A Leisurely day at Lake Powell. Day 5: Monument Valley and the Navajo Nation. Day 6: Mesa Verde and Moab. Day 7: Delve into Canyonlands and Arches National Parks. The final payment will be automatically charged to your credit card on the designated due date. The final payment of the remaining balance is required at least 65 days prior to the departure date of your tour. TourRadar never charges you a booking fee and will charge you in the stated currency. The following cards are accepted for "Insight Vacations" tours: Visa, Maestro, Mastercard, American Express or PayPal. Now, in Wonders of the West, Braverman surpasses all previous expectations with a novel about internal exile and the dark side of the American dream. It is the early 1960s and the world is on the verge of monumental change. Jordan Lerner is a teenager adrift in a land of brutally unconscious adults, struggling for breath in a place that is slowly losing air. Jordan's mother has dared to leave her husband and tradition for the idea of a second chance in California. She has risked crossing the country in a broken-down car, pawning jewelry like parts of herself to raise money for the road. J