

Rolling With Life's Changes Ideas

Fred Gardaphe (May 13, 2016)



A master at capturing the internal and external forces that bring change into the lives of her characters Labozzetta reminds us that supernatural and the common provide ways of dealing with the ups and downs of the loves and losses of family life.



Thieves Never Steal in the Rain, is Marisa Labozzetta's fourth book of fiction, her second of short stories. These stories differ from her first collection, At the Copa, in that they are linked, meaning there are familiar characters and settings throughout the ten stories; this makes the fiction ring like a novel by the time you finish reading them all.

[Labozzetta](#) [2]'s previous work has garnered critical attention and awards such as a [Pushcart Prize](#) [3] for At the Copa—also a finalist for the prestigious [John Gardner Fiction Award](#) [4] in 2009, and Sometimes it Snows in America was a finalist for the Eric Hoffer Award. One of the stories in this new collection, "Forecast for a Sunny day," won the Watchung Arts Center Award for Short Fiction in 2010. The author carries her award-winning skills to new levels in this work.

In "Villa Foresta," the opening story, Joanna and Elliot, a middle-aged couple who have lost a young daughter to an early death by accident, travel to Italy to get away from it all only to find themselves closer to their daughter than ever before, realizing that grief can't always overcome the loss that caused it.

Rosemary and Nate, another middle-aged couple are introduced in "Deluxe Meatloaf," where they meet for a dinner that signals the end of their marriage, something that takes Rosemary, a successful advice columnist, by surprise. Rosemary's answers to her readers often contains a recipe for some food that will aid in dealing with the problem she addresses; without a clue, or a recipe for her own problems, Rosemary deals with this loss by emptying her sorrows in the street outside the restaurant.

Labozzetta is a master at capturing the internal and external forces that bring change into the lives of her characters, and expressing them through a variety of voices. Whether it's self perceived (and obsessed) obesity, as in "Pretty Face" or a mistaken reading of how good others have it, as in "A Perfect Father," the author explores the strengths of her characters so thoroughly that their weaknesses seem natural partners. You can't have the good in life without the bad, and somehow you have to learn how to live a life balancing the two.

Some succeed, some fail, but all of her characters teach us much about our own lives. The female cousins who are the protagonists in each story come together in "Comfort Me, Stranger," to save Rosemary when the depression from her divorce makes it impossible for her to continue her advice column. Joanna, Nancy, Barbara and Angie, all take turns responding to Rosemary's readers, each failing to meet the reader's needs, yet together they succeed in saving their wounded cousin, though everyone is worried about the roommate she takes in to help ease her loneliness.

The final two stories bring us into the world of dealing with aging and dying parents, and in these stories the characters come together to help and sometimes hinder each other as they face new challenges. In this, as in the other stories, Labozzetta reminds us that supernatural and the common provide ways of dealing with the ups and downs of the loves and losses of family life.

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