

Where we have to go

By Meg Pirie

Lauren Kirshner's debut novel, *Where We Have to Go*, is published by McClelland & Stewart.

► For 11-year-old Lucy Bloom, navigating adolescence is a bumpy road.

Over the course of *Where We Have to Go*, Toronto-based author Lauren Kirshner marches her heroine through familiar terrain, but it's Lucy's quirky, precocious voice that tints this territory with humour and pathos. A socially isolated only child, Lucy's journey from 11 to 18 is fraught with painful moments and self-discovery, but you will root for her every step of the way.

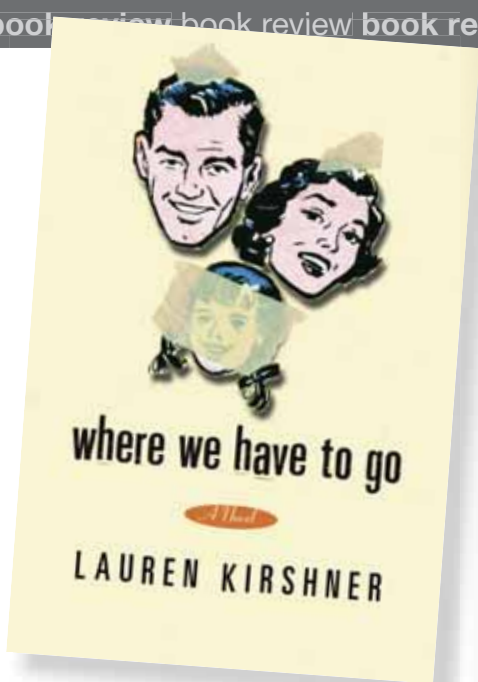
Set against the backdrop of 1990s Toronto, the story begins in a neighbourhood roughly located around Bathurst and Davenport. Pre-gentrification, this is an edgier, slightly tarnished Big Smoke, bursting to the seams with interesting characters, storytellers, and art collectives, before Queens Street was filled with high-end boutiques. This is youth culture at its best and, for those who also grew up during this decade, well-placed references to ALF, Lite-Brites, and the Smashing Pumpkins will not go unnoticed.

Kirshner's skill in this debut novel is that she creates a fully-formed protagonist replete with eccentricities, contradictions, and foreboding compulsions, but manages to keep her convincingly young.

Lucy's missteps, friendships, and small triumphs are believable. Peppered with razor-sharp dialogue and believable descriptions, the story is infused with humour that provides much-needed lightness during heavier times.

Even when she descends into an eating disorder, Lucy still functions as an agent.

In fact, the author's treatment of this subject is especially compelling. Lucy's anorexia is treated as symptomatic of larger issues: it's her misguided strategy to dissociate from her body;



a way to become invisible. Rather than anorexia becoming the issue in-and-of-itself, Kirshner manages to provide visceral descriptions, but avoids the pitfalls that come with an "issues" narrative, laden down with messages and lessons.

During the writing process, Kirshner, found herself cycling around different neighbourhoods of her childhood.

While Lucy's neighbourhood is never named, it's a composite of several places with some recognizable features: row house, lilac bushes, and corner stores. In many ways, this ever-changing, always-moving city is, ironically, one of the few constants in Lucy's life.

Ultimately, this is a story about love, acceptance, and the ties that bind. At one point near the end of her journey, Lucy observes that authentically telling your story "makes you ache, and brings you right into the pain of the moment." Infused with humour and melancholy, *Where We Have to Go* is a bittersweet, completely satisfying tale.

Meg Pirie is a lifelong Londoner who works in communications. Check out her website at <http://writeonfreelancing.com>. She tweets brilliantly @meg_pirie.

London Fanshawe Symphonic Chorus Organization presents

MESSIAH

~ G. F. Handel ~

Featuring Concert Players Orchestra
Fanshawe Chorus London
December 8, 2012 @ 7:30 pm - Centennial Hall

The Gerald Fagan Singers
December 9, 2012 @ 3:00 pm - St. Peter's Basilica

Tickets: Adults - \$30 • Students - \$15
To Purchase: Centennial Hall 519-672-1968 • Ticket Hotline 519-433-9650 • Chapters North & South (Cash Only)

daytime

Weekdays 11 AM, 5 PM, 11 PM

London's only TV talk show.

ROGERS TV
CABLE 13

PortStanley Festival Theatre
2013 SEASON

"Back in '59" *Back by popular demand!*
By Thom Currie
May 28th to June 8th

"Henry & Alice: Into The Wild"
By Michele Riml
June 12th to July 6th
*Adult Language

"Not In My Backyard"
A World Premier Musical Comedy
Book & Lyrics By Rachael & Brett McCaig
Music By Anthony Bastianon
July 10th to July 27th

"Mini Putt"
By Simon Joynes
July 31st to August 17th

"Drinking Alone"
By Norm Foster
August 21st to September 14th

For Tickets Call 519.782.4353
www.portstanleytheatre.ca