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Review of Such Good Work

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LJ Review Cover Sheet and Survey

Your name: Michael F. Russo

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Title of the book: *Such Good Work: A Novel*

Author or editor of the book: Johannes Lichtman

This book is recommended for: Public and academic libraries

Comments for your editor:

Review

Author: Johannes Lichtman

Title: *Such Good Work: A Novel*

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Release date: February 5, 2019

Number of pages: 288

Features:

Format: Hard cover

ISBN: 9781501195662

Price: \$26.00

In 2013, Jonas Anderson is an insecure creative writing instructor whose students view him skeptically, but no more skeptically than Jonas views himself. As a recovering drug addict, Jonas battles his past life daily: his desire for pills bedevils him always. A chronic failure at teaching and writing, Jonas stumbles through a series of jobs and relationships, eventually moving from the United States to Sweden, where he encounters a refugee crisis, an Afghan teenager named Aziz, and, ultimately, his purpose.

Through first-person narration and a style that is deceptively simple and straightforward, Lichtman creates a character we hope will succeed and with whom we can sympathize (“My life, like all lives, regularly presented me with pain”).

With a wry humor that sometimes harkens back to the wacky drug ravings of Hunter S. Thompson, the dialogue is mostly sharp and witty, though in the latter part of the book, it loses some of its edge. Yet the story’s momentum and sincerity never flag. Using an episodic, sometimes staccato structure in this debut novel, Lichtman takes Jonas from self-obsessed confusion to certain determination to do and be good.

VERDICT: Recommended for anyone interested in contemporary issues of politics and humanity.

Michael F. Russo

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