

# Pastoralia

By George Saunders

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From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of the novel *Lincoln in the Bardo* and the story collection *Tenth of December*, a 2013 National Book Award Finalist for Fiction.


Hailed by Thomas Pynchon as "graceful, dark, authentic, and funny," George Saunders now surpasses his *New York Times* Notable Book, *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*, with this bestselling collection of stories set against a warped, hilarious, and terrifyingly recognizable American landscape.

One of *Entertainment Weekly*'s Ten Best Books of the Year

"Artful and sophisticated... truly unusual. Imagine Lewis's *Babbitt* thrown into the backseat of a car going cross-country, driven by R. Crumb, Matt Groening, Lynda Barry, Harvey Pekar, or Spike Jonze." -- *The New York Times*

"Saunders is a provocateur, a moralist, a zealot, a lefty, and a funny, funny writer, and the stories in *Pastoralia* delight. We're very lucky to have them." -- *Esquire*

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## Pastoralia By George Saunders Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

In both his acclaimed debut, *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*, and his second collection, *Pastoralia*, George Saunders imagines a near future where capitalism has run amok. Consumption and the service economy rule the earth. The Haves are grotesque beings, mutilated by their crass desires and impossible wealth. The Have Nots are no less crippled, both emotionally and physically, by their inferior status. It's a kind of *Westworld* scenario, but instead of robots, the serving wenches, bellboys, and extras are real people, all of them mercilessly indentured by the free market.

Sounds like bleak stuff, doesn't it? Yet Saunders handles his characters with grace and humor. In the title story, for example, a couple occupies a squalid corner of a human zoo, where they act out a parody of caveman times, communicating in grunts and hand motions (speaking is instantly punishable by the Orwellian management) and conducting their lives during 15-minute smoke breaks. In "Winky," a born loser (really, all of Saunders's characters are born losers) visits a self-help seminar, where he's encouraged to rid himself of all those people who are "crapping in your oatmeal." Exhilarated at the prospect of dumping his simple, crazy-haired, religion-besotted sister, he returns home to the bleak discovery that he needs her as much as she needs him. The protagonist of "Sea Oak" works as a stripper in an aviation-themed restaurant and lives next to a crack house with his unemployed sisters, their babies, and a sweet old maid of an aunt. The aunt dies, and then returns from the grave--not so sweet, now, and still decomposing--with strange powers and a sobering message:

You ever been in the grave? It sucks so bad! You regret all the things you never did. You little bitches are going to have a very bad time in the grave unless you get on the stick, believe me!

The characters and situations in the rest of *Pastoralia* are equally wretched. But Saunders rescues them from utter despair with a loving belief in the triumph of the human spirit: yes, things can always get worse, but worse is better than the cold dirt of the grave. And in the small space between wretchedness and death there is plenty of room for laughter, and even love. --*Tod Nelson*

#### From Publishers Weekly

Saunders's extraordinary talent is in top form in his second collection (after *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*), in which his vision of a hellishly (and hopefully) exaggerated dystopia of late capitalist America is warmed and impassioned by his regular, irregular and flat-out wacky characters. Merging the spirit of James Thurber with the world of the Simpsons, Saunders's five stories and title novella feature protagonists who are losers yet also innocent dreamers: in "Winky," a single guy lives with his sister but hopes to improve his life with his new self-help cult's mantra, "Now is the time for me to win!" The tales pit bleak existences with details so contemporary they're futuristic, as in "Pastoralia," where the narrator is a "re-enactor" who lives in a cave as part of an exhibit in the Pastoralia theme park. Authenticity demands that he speak no English, pretend to draw pictographs on the wall and eat goat. His cave partner, Janet, is driving him crazy, because she uses English, smokes and hates goat; meanwhile, the clumsy, bullying management leans on the narrator to testify against her. In "Sea Oak," the narrator is a beleaguered male stripper who lives with his Aunt Bernie and two other relatives, both clueless, young single mothers whose dialogue consists of trashy talk-show vernacular. They eke out their lives in foggy complacency until the pathetically passive Bernie dies and comes back to life to boss around the household: "I never got nothing! My life was shit! I was never even up in a freaking plane." These characters may not have much, but they do possess the author's compassion, and so are enigmas of decency enshrouded in dark, TV-hobbled dumbness. Saunders, with a voice unlike any other

writer's, makes these losers funny, plausible and absolutely winning. (May)  
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Review

“Intoxicating.” —**Time Out**

“Exuberantly weird . . . brutally funny” —**The New York Times**

“Compulsively swallowed, sweetly addictive” —**San Francisco Bay Guardian**

“Demands to be reread immediately” —**The Wall Street Journal**

“Hilarious and heartrending” —**The Village Voice**

“Breathtaking . . . a masterpiece” —**San Diego Union Tribune**

“Riveting” —**U.S. News and World Report**

“Screamingly funny” —**Time**

“Saunders is a provocateur, a moralist, a zealot, a lefty, and a funny, funny writer, and the stories in **Pastoralia** delight. We’re very lucky to have them.” —**Esquire**

“Breathtaking, brutally hilarious satire, a savage skewering not only of the American workplace, but of the American character itself. . . . **Pastoralia** is a masterpiece of unsettling comedy.” —**San Diego Union Tribune**

“Artful and sophisticated. . . .truly unusual. Imagine Lewis’s Babbitt thrown into the back seat of a car going cross-country, driven by R. Crumb, Matt Groening, Lynda Barry, Harvey Pekar or Spike Jonze. That’d be a story Saunders could tell.”—**The New York Times**

“The short-story collection of the year . . . **Pastoralia** does everything a gathering of tales is supposed to do: It touches the reader but also provokes reflection, mirth, and pain.” —**Kansas City Star**

“Dazzling . . . Saunders’s misfits confront their degradations with heroic optimism; rarely have the comic nuances of suffering been tracked with such precision. These stories, injected with Saunders’s highly original blend of irony and tenderness, ride you down spirals of the absurd and fling you back to your own life, startled.” —**Men’s Journal**

“A master of distilling the disorders of our time into fiction.” —**Salon**

“Fiercely funny . . . [Saunders is] a master of the self-flagellating interior monologue.” —**The Boston Globe**

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Candice Delgado:**

What do you think about book? It is just for students since they are still students or it for all people in the world, the particular best subject for that? Merely you can be answered for that issue above. Every person has various personality and hobby for each other. Don't to be forced someone or something that they don't

want do that. You must know how great as well as important the book Pastoralia. All type of book is it possible to see on many methods. You can look for the internet methods or other social media.

### **Irene Justice:**

Nowadays reading books become more and more than want or need but also be a life style. This reading habit give you lot of advantages. The benefits you got of course the knowledge the rest of the information inside the book that improve your knowledge and information. The information you get based on what kind of publication you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with training books but if you want feel happy read one using theme for entertaining such as comic or novel. The actual Pastoralia is kind of e-book which is giving the reader unpredictable experience.

### **Buddy Stewart:**

Playing with family inside a park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with friends is thing that usually you might have done when you have spare time, after that why you don't try matter that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition details. Even you love Pastoralia, you could enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout fellas. What? Still don't obtain it, oh come on its referred to as reading friends.

### **Brianna Bell:**

Do you have something that you want such as book? The publication lovers usually prefer to select book like comic, short story and the biggest the first is novel. Now, why not seeking Pastoralia that give your fun preference will be satisfied by means of reading this book. Reading habit all over the world can be said as the means for people to know world far better then how they react in the direction of the world. It can't be explained constantly that reading routine only for the geeky individual but for all of you who wants to become success person. So , for all you who want to start reading through as your good habit, you could pick Pastoralia become your own starter.

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