

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: October 1, 2021

O Beautiful.

By Jung Yun

Nov. 2021. 320p. St. Martin's, \$27.99 (9781250274328)

Elinor Hanson, her name not quite matching her mixed-race visage, has 10 days to prove herself worthy of an assignment for the prestigious *Standard* magazine. At 42, she's struggling to establish her journalism career after long years in modeling. Her grad-school mentor Richard (and former lover, ahem) passed her the gig covering North Dakota's insane Bakken oil boom, citing his hip surgery plus Elinor being from North Dakota before her escape to New York City at 19. Returning decades later, nothing is familiar as everything is overwhelmed by multiplying roughnecks chasing big money and clashing with disgruntled locals desperate to preserve their former lives. Richard has dictated his expectations for the article, but the more Elinor talks to city and Native leaders, residents, transients, and strangers, the more she forms her own story about missing women, haunted by her disappeared Korean-born mother, who escaped Elinor's controlling white father a lifetime ago. Yun's sprawling second novel, after her brilliantly honed *Shelter* (2016), ambitiously confronts the multilayered mutations of the male gaze—modeling, catcalling, porn, #MeToo, sexual violence—magnified by socioeconomic disparities and, most affectingly, the cutting divides of race.

— Terry Hong