https://booklife.com/images/editors-pick.pngBeauty is hiding in the foliage and mundanity of Osier County, and Kiser reveals life in this corner of Kentucky through 14 intimate and moving vignettes showcasing the grief, hope, and pull of a remote place brimming with evocative stories. Kiser follows families and individuals as they navigate loss, change, and heartbreak. Loss is the most prominent thread. In “The Wedding Ring Quilt,” a woman reclaims childhood relics from her cousin’s youth in light of her death by suicide and recounts the subtle warning signs of abuse in a cousin’s marriage.

Every word here has earned its place on the page. Descriptions of Kentucky nature and contrasting city structures effortlessly draw readers into the scene, and both characters and setting pulse with life. Kiser’s people are full of incisive questions about identity, family, and generational trauma, especially in relation to southern culture. In “Daughters,” women in a family ranging over four generations grapple with the meaning of miscarriage, pregnancy, and motherhood in their shared experiences of grief and fear, while “Decoration Day” finds a daughter visiting her father’s gravesite, reminiscing on their complicated relationship, nostalgic for the place that brought both hardship and belonging: “the hills and the long chain of kinfolk who had been left behind.”

Kiser’s especially good at communicating legacy and connection through objects, such as a “Wedding Ring” quilt made by one narrator’s mother “of swatches of brocade dresses that had belonged to her own mother.” Those connections especially resonate because, as the subtitle suggests, many stories center on women who abandon the valleys of their childhood for city landscapes and college campuses. Kiser captures both the promise and loss of this, the complexity, common for first-generation students, of being caught between two worlds shaped heavily by class, generation, and locale. This collection is perfect for readers who have found themselves caught between two different lives and understand the many varied definitions of “home.”

**Takeaway:** Accomplished stories of being pulled towards and away from a rural home.

**Comparable Titles:** Beth Gilstrap’s *Deadheading*, Claire Keegan’s *Small Things Like These*.