



Gentlemen of Space: A Novel

Ira Sher

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Magnolia Court is not the most magical place in Florida, but to young Georgie Finch, this outsized housing project in the heart of the suburbs is the center of the universe. In this superbly crafted, imaginative, and intelligent novel, Georgie tells us the story of when his father, Jerry, won a competition in 1976 to become the first civilian man on the moon. He also tells us about his beautiful baby-sitter, who has a crush on Jerry; his Jackie O-like mother, Barbara, the long-suffering wife to an everyday genius; Jerry's high school friend Lyle Barnes, running for local office on his coattails; and the mysterious journalist Bob Nightly, who seems the only person determined to get to the bottom of who Jerry Finch really is.

Once Jerry is shot into space, Magnolia Court turns into the worst sort of American media circus, replete with card tables, Winnebagos, cookouts, and telescopes. Georgie tentatively navigates this space, dodging the starstruck commoners who have come to worship at the astronauts' feet. When Jerry goes missing, the camp turns into a vigil, punctuated by potluck suppers and banners. Eventually the astronauts come back without Jerry and likewise descend on Magnolia Court -- in their spacesuits -- to show their respect. All the while Georgie gets phone calls from his father in space, but no one will believe him. Should we? Or is his entire story just that, a story?

A feat of literary ventriloquism, *Gentlemen of Space* is surprising, captivating, and wholly original.

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