



Maintenance

Rob Benvie

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"A great novel that captures the loneliness and absurdity of the 1990s suburban experience. Dense and imaginative writing that often borders on the uncomfortable, but the edge of your seat is the best place to be."—Joel Plaskett

It is the summer of 1999, and the Sweltham family is leading an ordinary suburban existence. Former childhood volleyball champ Parker crisscrosses the continent as a sales rep for DynaFlex Sporting Goods, while his wife, Trixie, serves as the managing editor of *Record of Truth*, an unsuccessful journal for genocide studies. Their son Owen has just returned from juvenile prison to the vast horrors of high school. Heath, Parker's brother, has vowed to cut down on the weed and fried chicken for a regimen of self-improvement, obeying his AbDestroyer routine and crafting a screenplay that will dismantle the universe. All appears normal.

Yet in the summer's swelter, as Y2K anxiety grows, grim truths are revealed. Trixie is rocked by the discovery of an undiagnosable cerebral defect, rendering her toils at the journal trivial. Cataloging crunches and ignoring his Gulf War vet ex-girlfriend, Heath fights to reconcile confusions of the past with hopes for a meaningful future. Owen's religious fixations feed his Robitussin binges and fantasies of self-destruction. And while peddling his wares at the annual Empowerment Expo, Parker forges an uneasy friendship with Adam, an African political refugee harboring his own violent aspirations.

Sprawling yet scalpel-sharp, *Maintenance*, like some twenty-first-century *White Noise*, takes the suburbs to a geography you won't quite recognize.

Rob Benvie has recorded and performed with the rock bands Thrush Hermit, Camouflage Nights, and The Dears. He is the author of the novel *Safety of War*.

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