



★ **A Hawk in the Woods**

Carrie Laben

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“Like anyone on the uphill side of middle age,” newscaster Abigail Waite had “secretly harbored a hope that she was unique in all the world and the day would never come for her.” But she’s just been diagnosed with stage III melanoma, so she does what anyone would: she busts her twin sister, Martha, out of jail. A suspenseful tale of mixed motivations, Carrie Laben’s *A Hawk in the Woods* chronicles Abby’s final gamble to lay her ghosts to rest, blurring together villains and victims as a horrifying truth unfolds.

Martha’s been in jail since she and Abby were teenagers, so Abby is determined to combine reconciliation and a catch-up in their trip down memory lane, beginning with the family home in upstate New York and ending at their summer cabin in Minnesota. What she hasn’t planned on is an eerie folk song crooning about a lonely hawk that’s suddenly playing on every station, or the hawks that are following them with increasing malevolence, or Martha’s own free will and the way it tugs against something in her own. But the Waites have always had unnatural power, and “You don’t get hurt when you have power ... You get hurt when you don’t have enough power.”

As the miles unfold, Laben nimbly reconstructs the sisters’ story between present dangers. Abby’s competing motivations trade on what’s human to reveal inhumane damage, while elements of supernatural horror turn this story of family dysfunction into a road trip to—or from—hell. Throughout, Laben’s adroit psychological manipulation creates sympathy for the devil amid unrelenting tension.

In this uncanny world, the darkest moments don’t come from the supernatural horror but from the realization that the Waites’ underlying dysfunction is a near and dear part of our own.

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (May/June 2019)

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