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### **Becky Manawatu**

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In Becky Manawatu's novel *Aue*, a Māori family comes to grips with its troubled past.

After his parents drown and he survives, Taukiri only has his little brother, Ari. But Taukiri is traumatized by the event, and he leaves Ari with relatives. He tries to lose himself in music and drugs. Both boys cope with their losses alone—as well as with the painful family secrets that the losses brought to the surface.

Ari, distressed by his brother's betrayal and terrorized by an abusive uncle, is welcomed by a neighbor whose connection to his family runs far deeper than the boy understands. His youthful innocence, which is exemplified by his use of plasters to soothe physical and emotional aches, is heartbreaking, especially as his faith that his brother will come back for him begins to waver.

While Ari remembers his old life as perfect, his family history is a haunting patchwork of addiction and abuse, lies and half-truths, and wishes and dreams that never seem to work out. As the story follows Ari, Taukiri, and others, these secrets lurch out of hiding, revealing the full scale of the tragedy. Even as Ari finally makes progress in his own recovery, Taukiri's life takes a frightening turn, causing him to reassess his own capabilities as a brother.

The prose is as changeable as the ocean: fluid most of the time, choppy and fragmented during intense moments. Each narrator contributes a unique perspective, their voices weaving together to form a coherent, devastating tale. A frightening climax forces all of the characters to reckon with the consequences of their actions—and gives them the chance at redemption that they long for.

*Aue* is a novel about how trauma can spread from one generation to the next, and how it is never too late for second chances.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (May / June 2022)

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