



Homesick

Jennifer Croft

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Jennifer Croft's *Homesick* is a tender, disturbing memoir of sisterly love that penetrates the insular world of childhood to reveal its secrets, loyalties, and fears.

Croft, an author and translator by profession, proves fascinated with words, especially those that are untranslatable without lived experience to vivify them. The Portuguese word *saudade*, and even *homesick*, encapsulate longing for what has been lived and loved, become part of the soul, and then lost. Her memoir is transpersonal, shining light into the secret recesses of the mind and heart as a young girl painfully learns the delicate balance between herself and the other.

In this fine-spun narrative, Amy—sensitive and gifted, but too open to the pain of the world—and her sister Zoe, who is three years younger and afflicted with serious illnesses, are taught that the world is filled with tragedies and disasters. Amy lists some of them for Zoe: tornadoes, earthquakes, plane and car crashes, wars, and asteroids. She says that “it’s a miracle a single one of us lives for a single fraction of a second.” In the face of it all, Amy and Zoe are a perfect team. They take refuge in each other.

But secrets and lies wedge between the sisters when they fall in love with the same boy. Distance and guilt enter the picture as Amy is awarded a full scholarship and leaves home, while Zoe’s health issues grow more troubling.

In this marvel of a book that magically expresses the untranslatable, Croft follows Amy’s tortured path as she asks how far, and in what way, we are responsible for how loved ones’ lives play out. In her struggle to answer such questions, Amy learns the extent and limitations of love’s power.

KRISTINE MORRIS (July/August 2019)

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