



Irreversible Things

Lisa Van Orman Hadley

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In Lisa Van Orman Hadley's novel-through-stories *Irreversible Things*, a family moves from a Florida beach town to a Utah mountain town, trading in a dark situation next door for life with their Mormon family and transitioning from surfing to skiing.

Lisa Van Orman is also the lead character's name; she narrates all of these changes. Her family's stories are tight and composed, delivered with such gravity that they can stand on their own, though together they form a heartbreaking, familiar tale about growing up and growing into an understanding of your family.

Lisa's mother centers the book. She is kind, naïve, and stubborn; she says "woeey" when surprised and calls her family "guysies." In the endearing "Glossary," she is characterized through such speech patterns. Heavier stories include "Irreversible Things," in which the family's next-door neighbor is murdered by her husband, and in which Lisa records her mother's grief in a child's terms, not quite realizing what her mother lost with the death of her friend.

Lisa's mother's displacement feeds into her children's displacement. When Halloween falls on a Sunday, she tells the kids that, because they are Mormon, they must go trick-or-treating the night before. Those who open their doors to the trick-or-treaters are baffled by their costumes. After the family's move back to Utah, the children try to acclimate to their mother's home, now feeling out of place themselves.

Dramatic irony and sharp details communicate what Lisa, as a child, sees but can't yet articulate. The text plays with headings and ordering its stories in reverse, refreshing the drama inherent to childhood discoveries and family deaths in adulthood.

Thoughtful and funny, *Irreversible Things* plays with the forms of short stories, novels, and memoirs, resulting in hybrid text that articulates change across a lifetime.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (November / December 2019)

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