



## ★ Parsimony

### **Peter Nash**

Fomite Press (Oct 1, 2017)

Softcover \$15.00 (227pp)

978-1-944388-11-9

*Family shapes us; Parsimony exposes this truth with effortlessly elegant prose and characters who linger.*

With eloquent language worthy of literary recognition, Peter Nash's *Parsimony* offers wisdom fraught with interpersonal and political conflicts.

David Ansky narrates. He recalls his childhood, which he spent listening to his father scoff at the Red Scare and watching his mother ignore the obvious love of her suicidal friend.

David's father, Jacob, is a Russian history scholar who feels disillusioned with American life. He is bothered by the influence of ideology on society. In the context of the Vietnam and Korean wars and the civil rights movement, his Jewish family struggles to find their place in the cultural puzzle.

Nash writes beautifully. Each sentence is imbued with poetic talent. David's understanding of how his parents' lives influenced his own unfurls as he analyzes the details of their complex relationships with each other and the world.

David's ruminations also illuminate his emotional development, especially as he deals with an aging father who easily bursts into tears and who forgets his granddaughter's name. David is still hurt by Jacob's distance during his childhood—a distance that his mother attributed to Jacob's upbringing. Now, when David considers his ex-wife, "so tenacious in her will to wring the most out of every day," his true character, as well as his family's influence on his emotional intelligence, crystallizes.

As his past and present lives coalesce, David's daughter resents him for the divorce; his mother, long-dead, advises him, a cigarette between her fingers, from his memories; recollections of family friends exert influence—and David realizes the catharsis of sending his father to a nursing home.

While it is thoroughly imagined in its historical context, *Parsimony* is at its core the story of a family. There may be years of drama quietly hanging on the fringes of relationships and paranoid behaviors beyond comprehension, but family shapes us, through and through. *Parsimony* exposes this truth with effortlessly elegant prose and characters who linger in the memory.

AIMEE JODOIN (September/October 2017)

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