



★ **Second Sight**

Aoife Clifford

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Aoife Clifford's *Second Sight* is a gripping, gut-wrenching thriller. Set in Kinsale, Australia, the novel moves at a tantalizing pace. Eliza discovers Kinsale's blackened heart, with new horrors revealed at every turn.

After a lethal bushfire devours Eliza Carmody's hometown, the budding corporate lawyer is plunged into a gripping drama. Starting with a seemingly unrelated incident—an old schoolmate going berserk in traffic—Eliza is led into a sickening morass of old grudges, gossip, and rivalries.

The whole town is traumatized from its losses. One man recounts finding a burned flock on his property: "great black carcasses all on their sides, fleeces reduced to charcoal, little legs all up in the air." But the fire's impact is more than psychological, and although Eliza is supposed to be representing the company accused of starting the fire, her loyalty is called into question. Eventually, Eliza's father, a former detective, and her sister are implicated, and Eliza has to take a hard look at her own role as well.

Chapters alternate between Eliza's present and her flashbacks to 1996, just before she left Kinsale for college. This device gives her depth, revealing a flawed and sometimes insecure individual. That she's no golden girl raises the mystery's stakes: Eliza's memory of herself has to be reappraised. Characters from the past recur in the present, adding dimension and subtext to the tale. A deft authorial touch brings tension to a head with speed. One explosive fight between Eliza and her sister shows how unspoken resentment festers, blowing reality out of proportion.

Second Sight is an excellent, tense, slick mystery that investigates a small town's evil secrets.

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