

★ **The Hope Fault****Tracy Farr**

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Tracy Farr's carefully crafted literary novel *The Hope Fault* explores what family means when it's placed beside the weight of history.

The story is set in the fictitious Australian town of Cassetown, Geologue Bay, where Iris and her family have gathered to clean out the family's vacation home before it is sold. First to arrive is Iris, along with her troubled son, Kurt, and her free-spirited niece, Luce. Next come Iris's ex-husband-but-still friend Paul and his new wife, Kristin, along with their still-unnamed new baby. Pretty soon the drudgery of packing turns into a full-blown house party, ending with Iris facing a new health concern, Kurt taking a dangerous, alcohol-fueled walk on the beach, and Luce keeping a new secret about the family matriarch, Rosa.

The book changes course as it breaks into its next act. The second section tells Rosa's story in reverse chronological order through a series of linked short vignettes that read like diary entries. Rosa's story unfolds piece by piece, laying bare the meaning behind many of the things she left behind in the Cassetown home. Rosa's story is compelling; she's driven by love that has been touched by human failings and tragedy.

The book ends by wrapping up the drama of its first part, but the action comes with a newfound awareness of what the debris of a well-lived life means, and why it matters.

Writing is spare and close, a feeling that is echoed by the rain driving the characters inside the house and keeping them there over the course of the three-day weekend. Narration is written in a very close third-person voice, occasionally revealing a character's thoughts and sometimes leaving their motivations intentionally vague.

The Hope Fault is a riveting novel that elegantly achieves a vision of family and history that lingers beyond the page.

JEREMIAH ROOD (September/October 2018)

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