



The Lighthouse

Christopher Parker

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In Christopher Parker's supernatural novel *The Lighthouse*, grief and love are explored in hopeful and mysterious ways.

Amy is still reeling from the loss of her mother when her father, a detective with whom she has a strained relationship, takes her to picturesque Seabrook to close a missing person's case. Meanwhile, Ryan struggles to maintain his family's ranch after his father's debilitating stroke. The ranch has catered to tourists in Seabrook for three generations, though lately business has been drying out. These troubles combine with the expenses of rehabilitation; the local bank manger wants to have a word with Ryan.

Amy and Ryan have a traumatic chance encounter, after which they become close friends. They spend a beautiful day together, riding horses on the ranch and attending the local lighthouse festival. But the abandoned Seabrook lighthouse has a haunted backstory, and, on the night that Amy and her father arrive, it lights up. Concern grows as the day progresses: Amy hasn't heard from her father, and the secrets between she and Ryan become more apparent.

At the core of the story are the complicated relationships between parents and their children, as well as the connections that mutual experiences of grief can lead to. Amy and Ryan deal with the parallel experience of the deaths of their mothers by allowing themselves to become vulnerable with one another. They are drawn together due this shared grief, even as the town of Seabrook begins to disappear around them.

As the book continues, deep care for the characters and their experiences is generated. This occurs because of the book's empathetic language, and because developments find Amy and Ryan surrounded by parental figures who guide them through one of the hardest times of their lives. Their relationship is compelling—and a powerful center for the narrative's development.

Due to this extensive relationship building, the story slows, matching its mysterious elements; conversations are used to move Amy and Ryan's personal emotional experiences forward, sans the presence of action. Still, as the town literally disappears them, the mystery of the ghosts surrounding the lighthouse is reintroduced; the story moves with efficiency toward an ending that includes a wonderful payoff for what came before.

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ANNA GENTRY (November 10, 2021)

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