



The Mercy of the Tide

Keith Rosson

Meerkat Press (Feb 21, 2017)

Softcover \$16.95 (296pp)

978-0-9966262-4-8

Mysterious goings-on permeate a small town in this chilling novel.

A deadly car accident binds four citizens together in the quiet hamlet of Riptide, Oregon, and it seems also to have awakened something unseemly. Keith Rosson's *The Mercy of the Tide* is an exquisitely honed, beautifully written novel.

High school senior Sam Finster and his deaf nine-year-old sister, Trina, mourn their mother, who was allegedly driving drunk when she hit the town's kindly librarian and the wife of its sheriff, Dave Dobbs. Also mourning is deputy Nick Hayslip, who was secretly having an affair with Melissa Finster. The accident brings to the forefront long-suppressed memories of his time in Vietnam, and he wrestles with these while trying to maintain law and order in the oceanside town.

The story unfolds from the varying viewpoints of Sam, Trina, Dave, and Nick, as each tries to cope with their pain. Trina turns to reading books about nuclear war and expresses an unhealthy obsession with US–Russia relations. Sam hangs with his longtime friend, and they plan their escapes after graduation. Dave dresses pillow cushions in his wife's nightgown to retain her scent, and Nick falls off the wagon.

There are reports of small animals found torn apart on the beach, and then the kids find human remains while sledding in one of the town's parks, named for a local Indian tribe.

And, always, there's the West Coast weather, a perpetual dull rain, which seems to saturate every nuance of daily life—and death—in Riptide.

Authentic characters and the ambiance of the withering 1980s seaside town come through via writing rich in detail. Sam and his friend Toad don't just listen to music, they rock out to the Ramones; the locals don't just go to the bar, they hustle, chug, and flirt at the Sandy Bottom. The national timeline is somewhat joltingly skewed per the author's choice, though.

Audiences will relish uncovering the mysterious goings-on that permeate a small town in Keith Rosson's chilling *The Mercy of the Tide*.

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (March/April 2017)

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