

Weekend Pass

Paul Cavanagh

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In Paul Cavanagh's novel *Weekend Pass*, a patient takes leave from a drug treatment facility to try to repair the damage done to her family.

Tasha's story is gradually revealed via details about her relationships with her family members, including her father, late mother, aunt, husband, and young son. Its setup is direct, and its pieces are tied together in neat form, though the book is clear that Tasha's conflicts are ones without the possibility of simple answers.

Tasha obtains her weekend pass in the hopes of seeing her son, who fell into a coma after finding her drugs. His injury was the reason that she entered rehab. While her son is no longer comatose, it remains unclear whether he'll suffer long-term damage. Tasha's husband struggles with how to manage the meeting between his wife and son. Beyond him, the rest of Tasha's family also struggles: some are supportive, some are leery about her progress. Each of their perspectives is made sympathetic.

While this is Tasha's story, her dynamics with others are at the fore. Flashbacks are used to inform current tensions, revealing, for example, that Tasha's father has had a fraught relationship with his family, having left Tasha's late mother after cheating with his students. Meanwhile, Tasha's husband has accepted help from a colleague in Tasha's absence, resulting in romantic tension. The book balances these conflicts, avoiding melodrama; information is revealed over the course of the weekend, introducing events that further strain the family's circumstances.

Weekend Pass is a layered novel about family dysfunction. Tasha's family deals with their problems in a concentrated time period, and though her pass lasts only a weekend, it changes her life and the lives of those around her.

JEFF FLEISCHER (January / February 2021)

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