

## Whiskey and Ribbons

**Leesa Cross-Smith**

Hub City Press (Mar 6, 2018)

Hardcover \$27.00 (272pp)

978-1-938235-38-2

*Whiskey and Ribbons is an absorbing delight, illumined by richly described relationships and thoughtful explorations of life's central questions.*

The tale of a young police officer killed in the line of duty, *Whiskey and Ribbons* is an engrossing, warm, and moving look at family, friendship, loss, and love.

Eamon and Evangeline are a young couple living in Louisville, Kentucky, and expecting their first child when Eamon is shot and killed on the job. Dalton, Eamon's adopted brother and a close friend of Evangeline's, moves in to help her cope with this loss and care for her infant son. The point of view alternates between the three adults, moving back and forth in time to before and after Eamon's death, covering Eamon and Evangeline's romance, Eamon's fears about his job, Dalton's feelings about his adopted family, and more.

Cross-Smith writes each of these characters with depth and makes each one equally engaging. Eamon's chapters capture his fears for Evangeline should anything happen to him. These sections contrast beautifully and heartrendingly with Evangeline's descriptions of her grief. Dalton's own complex romantic relationships provide a contrast to the steadiness of Eamon and Evangeline's love. Frances and Cassidy, Dalton's two love interests, come to life as fully realized characters as well, and Dalton's ambivalent feelings about meeting his biological father provide a satisfying subplot.

The plot is simple and develops slowly; it is not the main source of this novel's satisfactions. Instead, it's the novel's emotional truths, particularly as major life events are grappled with, that hold attention. The novel ponders some of life's most pressing questions: what makes a family, what parents and children deserve from each other, what makes a good marriage, and, most of all, how to cope with grief and loss.

Leesa Cross-Smith's *Whiskey and Ribbons* is an absorbing delight.

REBECCA HUSSEY (March/April 2018)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*